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GREAT HUR  
TRAIL

DAVID  
DOUGLASS



7

ON THE GREAT FUR TRAIL

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"ROUND HIM WERE DANCING SCORES OF MADDENED BRAVES, WHILE  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN FLUNG BURNING BRANCHES AT HIM."

[See page 195.

# ON THE GREAT FUR TRAIL

A STORY OF THE OLD TRAPPING DAYS

BY  
DAVID DOUGLAS

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY  
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# ON THE GREAT FUR TRAIL

## CHAPTER I

### NEW METHODS AND OLD FOES

THE young man midway along the big mess-table stood out in striking contrast to the majority of the other men lounging around the table, smoking and talking; rather, the company had been talking until that youngster had leapt to his feet, and, by the vehemence in his voice, brought them up with a start. The great log fires burning on the stone hearths at either end of the mess-room, and ships' lanterns and tallow-dipped pine faggots stuck in iron clamps on walls and rafters, cast fitful shadows, and showed up the keen young face, eyes glowing with enthusiasm, and chin firmly set and thrust out aggressively.

"See!" he cried, and he pointed to the flags that hung about the walls—English ensigns with "H.B.C." staring white on a red background. "See, the flag of the Company is no

longer revered by the Indians; they start from their encampments, loaded with pelts which we need, and the people at home clamour for, but long before they reach Fort Prince of Wales, they turn aside, and the North-West Company get the furs! Why? You know, you men who stay behind the walls of Prince of Wales, you know! 'Tis because we go not out to nurse our trade, while the North-West men go a-seeking. Much prosperity has made us lazy. We think, because the Hudson Bay Company has grown powerful and important, by the labours of those who went before us, that it will ever be so; but, I tell you, I see the day coming when the Company will be faced with ruin!"

Henry Mostyn paused, as much to fetch breath as to give time for thought to his hearers, sea-captains of the ships lying in the offing, traders whose faces were lined with the hardships they had endured, and soldiers of the garrison of the fort which lay on the spit of sand pushing out into the bay at the mouth of the Churchill River, which emptied its waters into Hudson Bay. Indians, too, were there—natives who had helped to make the Company what it was. And, for a few moments, these hardy souls looked at the nineteen-year-old youth who had dared to indict them!

Then a clamour of angry voices arose, and out of it sounded, above all others, the voice of a bearded trader, who, jumping to his feet at



the far end of the mess-table, flung down his pipe, banged the table, and demanded a hearing.

White-faced, not with fear, but with the enthusiasm that had seized him, Henry Mostyn sat down, waiting. He knew what was coming from this man, Robert Blaine.

His sitting down seemed to be the signal for a cessation of the uproar, and all eyes were turned towards Blaine.

"The boy is mad—puffed up because the Company has recognised his work," he said scornfully. "A good trader—we grant him that—but still only a boy who knows but little of the inner workings; what right has he to try to teach us our business? Have we not grown old in the service of the Company—have we not helped to build it up? How many thousand pelts from this fort alone did we not send home last year? And then he talks as though the Company is going to the dogs! What care we for the North-West Company? We can beat it to its knees when we like! These boys have always schemes to set the world afire. Ugh!"

And, with a gesture of impatience and scorn, Blaine sat down, but had scarcely done so when Mostyn was on his feet once more.

"Hear me!" he cried, as the uproar seemed likely to begin afresh. "Hear me! Trader Blaine tells of the pelts that we sent home last

year; but he does not say how many we sent the year before, and the year before that! You know, all of you know! Captain Corrington can tell you what the folks way back in the Old Country are saying!"

As Mostyn sat down, everybody turned to the bluff-faced old captain of the "Seagull," which had cast anchor in the river that very morning. He was an uncle of Mostyn's, and while visiting the Mostyn house, where Henry's father lay very ill, had told the trader and his son that there was great dissatisfaction in England, where the people interested in the Company were asking why the yearly returns were showing signs of decreasing. Henry's father, who was the chief trader in the Fort, had wanted to come to the meeting that night, but could not, and so had told Henry to take an opportunity, if one presented itself, to warn the company and to urge them to greater efforts. The boy (who had long known that things were not as they should be) had not found an opportunity and so had made it, to the consternation of the gathering. He had realised that several of them—especially Blaine, whose family had for years been at bitter enmity with the Mostyns, ever since the early days when they had been first to settle at a little post in the fur country—would oppose him. He expected it, at least from Blaine, and he was prepared for the storm he raised.

Captain Corrington, seeing that the company expected him to speak, got upon his feet, and, although a man of action rather than words, told very forcibly those things which he knew. As he spoke, Henry Mostyn saw that the opposition he himself had aroused was gradually dying down, although Blaine, as if refusing to be convinced, sat sulkily scowling at the youth.

Corrington sat down amidst a tense silence, no one seeming to know what to say.

Then, after a few minutes, Dick Harvey, a trader with a reputation all over the fur country, got up.

"If the Governor were here," he said, "we should know what to do. After all, it's a matter for him, but as he's away, and won't be back for at least two or three months, we must wait; nothing can be done."

Henry Mostyn got upon his feet instantly.

"And during those two months," he said quietly, but firmly, "we shall allow the North-West men to do as they like! Even now, the Indians will be on the trail from their trapping grounds—and this year's returns will be lower than last year's! Something must be done!"

"The boy's right!" exclaimed old Corrington, and half a dozen others. "We must do something, without waiting for the Governor."

"And I'm willing," put in Mostyn quickly, "to do anything. I'll go out and meet the

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Indians, if you'll give me some guides and trade goods!"

The men at the table looked at him in astonishment. It was years since the Hudson men at Prince of Wales had troubled to go out to meet the Indians. "Why should we go?" had been the attitude. "They come to us!" And now here was this youth, able, it is true, to drive a good bargain with the natives, and by no means a child in the ways of the wilds, offering to set a new fashion for them! The very audacity of the boy gripped them and appealed to their imagination and the venture-some spirit.

"Hang me!" cried a trader, banging the table, "that's the spirit! And I'll go too! What say you, Blaine?"

Thus appealed to, Blaine, scowling still, and chagrin writ large on his face, said:

"As the Governor's away and this cub's father's ill, I must stay here; but—but my boy shall go."

Sitting there, listening to the words of young Mostyn, Blaine had realised that the boy had carried the whole company with him; and although the suggestion having come from a Mostyn, he had been against it, yet because he knew that the project would bring good results, he was determined that the Blaines should take part in it. Therefore he had quickly made up his mind that his son Thomas—whose hatred

of the Mostyns was as bitter as his own—should go, and, moreover, that he should go in company with Henry Mostyn.

Therefore the gathering fell to making plans. It was decided that half a dozen bands should go out in different directions, and strike for points where it was known that the North-West men intercepted the incoming Indians. The start was to be made in three days' time, and, when he went back home that night, Henry Mostyn was overjoyed. He was one of those devotees of the Hudson's Bay Company—men who believed in its greater destiny, and who saw even beyond the mere trading; saw that by active pushing forward into the Great Unknown the boundaries of Britain could be extended.

"My boy," his father said that night, after Henry had recited the story of the noisy meeting, "I know just what you're thinking of, and I'm proud of you for it. But, remember this, the Great North lands are not easy to subdue. Scores of men have tried to go far west, and all tell of the dangers awaiting whoever goes. But you're young—and you're a Mostyn—so I suppose it's no use arguing with you, and, after all, I don't want to. Go ahead, lad! and God bless you!"



## CHAPTER II

### THE GREAT ADVENTURE BEGINS

THE cannon on the walls of Fort Prince of Wales awoke the echoes of the woods in the misty December morning, trumpets blared, the great gates creaked open, and through them came long toboggan sleighs drawn by huskies whose bells tinkled musically as the sleighs slipped over the snow-clad ground. The emissaries of the Company were going forth. For the last three days preparations had been pushed forward, the traders chosen, Indian guides assigned to them, sleighs had been loaded to their limit with trading goods, the best dogs selected to drag them through the wild white vastness. Now that the project had been entered upon, everybody in Prince of Wales was enthusiastic, and there had been much competition for places in the trains; great things were expected of the venture; and the traders were all anxious to take part in it. Only a limited number could go, however, and in the end a dozen white men were chosen by lots,

two to each train, with two Indian guides, besides a couple of Indian hunters.

The dog trains, starting from the fort at a trot, worked up to a gallop, and for a matter of ten miles all headed in the same direction, after which, with much handshaking on the part of the white men, they parted company, and "halloaing" lustily, struck off in different directions, each heading for the point arranged at which they should wait during the weeks till the spring should come and allow the Indians to travel down the rivers with their canoes loaded with pelts.

The separation of the trains left Henry Mostyn and Thomas Blaine together, and neither of the youngsters was particularly happy, because in the beginning neither had wanted to accompany the other. Old man Blaine had worked this scheme, over which many a tough trader shook his head. Robert Henry, the man who had been chosen to go with young Mostyn, had, the day before the start, dropped out, electing Thomas Blaine to take his place, seeing that, having drawn and won in the lottery for going, he had the right to name a substitute.

"You'll go, I tell you, Tom," old Blaine had said firmly when the boy protested that he wasn't going with Mostyn. "It's cost me fifty pounds to buy off Henry, and——"

Thomas, a strapping youngster of about

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Mostyn's age, and with a reputation scarcely less than the other's, flared up.

"I hate him," he cried. "And you ought to know, father, what it means to be tied for months to a fellow you hate! We've fought each other, and worked against each other scores of times. I won't go—I'd rather be out of this affair altogether than go with him!"

"See here, you young pup," his father said quietly but firmly. "I say you're going, and you shall. Listen: young Mostyn's bossing that train, and if it comes back a failure, he'll be to blame. If left to himself, he'll make good. You're going to see he doesn't make good. I've been waiting for years to get even with old Mostyn, and here's the chance. I'm leaving it to you to put a spoke in the boy's wheel. You're going, so get ready!"

Thomas, who saw that there was no more to be said, and who, when he knew what his father's intentions were, was not at all averse from furthering them, immediately began to bustle around, while Henry Mostyn, when he learned who was to be his companion, was terribly upset.

"I tell you, dad," he said to the sick trader, "I'm almost inclined to give up—and would do if I hadn't proposed this scheme. There'll be trouble between us two before the trip's over!"

"Lad," his father said quietly, "I know you'll do your best to keep trouble away.



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Remember, it takes two to make a quarrel, and remember, too, that trouble would mean, probably, the failure of your train. It 'ud be a poor show if you were the only one who came back having made a mess of things!"

"I know, dad," Henry said, "and that's why I'm not keen on Blaine coming with me. The Blaines are dead against this venture. May they not be hoping to make trouble and bring failure to my train? The worst of it is, three of the Indians I've got are old guides of the Blaines—don't you see what that might mean?"

"I do, laddie, I do," the old man answered. "But you're not scared—and a Mostyn, too? No, that's right," as Henry jumped to his feet, half angry at the bare suggestion. "Well, go ahead, and—and, Henry, who knows? You may be able to alter things between us Mostyns and the Blaines. Old Blaine has never forgiven me for having got the Chippewayans to come in, after he'd failed badly and they'd raided the post away at Three Forks. I'm willing to bury the hatchet, son, and, may be, you'll help to dig the grave of it out there, alone with young Blaine for a month or so. Do *your* best, Henry, and God bless you!"

Henry groped for his father's hand. He knew that, rough man of the wilds though his father was, he was yet one of nature's gentlemen, who bore no ill-will against his fellows,

and had for years grieved over the antagonism of the Blaines.

"Thanks, dad," he muttered. "I'll go, surely, and if the feud isn't ended when I come back, it won't be my fault."

Altogether, therefore, when Henry Mostyn and Thomas Blaine cracked their thongs above the heads of the huskies, as they parted company with the other trains, there was the making of drama of the wild places, where men fought with the gloves off, and, primitive-souled, cared for naught but themselves; while, on the other hand, there was the opportunity for the fashioning of a friendship which should sweep away years-old animosities, and stand firm through the years to come.

"Up, Blacknose!" cried Henry to the leader of the dogs drawing his sleigh.

Blacknose was a fine wolf-dog, white as snow except for the black nose which gave him his name, and never had man a more faithful chum than young Mostyn had in this beast—part wolf, part dog. Now he broke into a longer stride, and set the pace for the other dogs who, straining at their harness, bowled the heavy sleigh, loaded with blankets and trade goods of all descriptions, over the hard snow at a pace which the other sleighs found it difficult to keep up with. Mostyn's sleigh was in the van. Then came four in the care of the Indians, and after those, Blaine's. One of the sleighs carried the bulk

of the provisions, each of the others having some as well; for it was realised that the journey along the Churchill River, at the point where an affluent ran down from Reindeer Lake, would take several weeks, after which there would be the long wait for spring in the frozen wastes.

The biting wind, blowing from the north, cut through the warm furs of the travellers, slashed across their faces like whip-lashes; but they were used to this, and the rigours of the winter held no terrors for them. There was little enough of excitement during that first day, and Mostyn's mind was mostly filled with thoughts of the great venture on to which he had spurred the traders at the Fort.

Night came, and Henry, leaping off his sleigh, called a halt; thereupon the men fell to work, hastily throwing up a wind-break—a wall made of snow—digging down below the surface to the moss, which served both for bed and for fuel, and then dogs and men took shelter behind the wall. The Indians, when this was done, built a fire out of the moss they had found and the wood they had chipped from stunted trees, dotted about here and there. Over this earthen pots were placed, and very soon the air was filled with the appetising smell of cooking food.

While some of the Indians attended to this, the rest, with Mostyn and Blaine, fed the dogs,

and looked them over for signs of foot-sore or frost-bite. When this was done, they went back to the fire. Then came supper, for which all had excellent appetites.

"Good travelling, Mostyn!"

Henry looked up, rather astonished at the tone in Blaine's voice; it was positively cheerful, and held a hint of friendliness.

"You're right," he said, not a little glad at the suggestion conveyed that Blaine did not intend to allow ill-feeling to mar the expedition. "If we can keep that up, we'll make the Lake in about a fortnight, and the Nelson a couple of days after, which will mean we shall miss the hard winter travelling."

"If we don't miss that we'll have a stiff time," Blaine answered. "Meant to tell you before, Mostyn—er, Henry." He hesitated just a moment after using the Christian name, and Henry said nothing then, but noted the change immediately and was glad. "But," Blaine went on, "just before we left the Fort Hawke Eye there came in and said that he had heard that a party of the North-West men had left Fort William over a month ago and were heading for Churchill just below the Reindeer, while several other parties had also gone out farther afield. I don't know what father said at that meeting, Henry, but I reckon you spoke the truth: the Company'll go to the dogs unless something's done, and——"

"We're trying to do something, Tom," said Henry, speaking familiarly, after the example set by his companion. "But, say, if we hit the trail of those North-West men and run against them, there's likely to be trouble. Dad told me that they're determined to get the trade, and have enlisted all sorts of men—men who stick at nothing; several of them are Hudson traders and trappers, who've been bought over because they know the Indians well and can influence them."

"Dirty traitors," snapped Blaine. "Wait till we meet 'em and they make trouble! I'm going to turn in now," and, rolling up in his blanket, he threw himself down in the shelter of the snow wall; the rest, with the exception of the Indian left to keep the first watch, following his example shortly afterwards.

Mostyn, lying looking up at the stars that night, had much food for thought in what Blaine had told him about the rival Company's men. This meant a race to the Nelson, and he was thankful that he had the best dogs that the Fort held.

Henry's thoughts swung back over the years which held the story—so full of romance and adventure—as told him by his father, who had met the most famous traders in the old days of the Hudson Bay Company—the story which told of how the great Company had been formed in 1670. Two Frenchmen, Radisson and

Groselliers by name, had been fur traders for France down south, operating from the St Lawrence, and, after having blazed the trail through boundless forest and seemingly unending prairie, had been disgusted at the reward of contempt meted out to them. Thereupon they had gone to England by the persuasion of Sir Robert Carr, then British Commissioner in the New England Colonies.

"They are the best present I can make to His Majesty," Carr had written to Lord Arlington in 1665, after he had heard what these two men of France had to tell of the inexhaustible resources of fur. So to England they went. Prince Rupert was interested in them, and by his influence a couple of ships were fitted out to go a-voyaging to Hudson Bay. Radisson, in the "Eagle," was driven back by a terrific storm, but Groselliers, in the "Nonsuch," came to James Bay on September 29, 1668, and, on the River Nemisco, a fort called Rupert was built. When, the following June, the "Nonsuch" sailed for England, she was loaded with pelts.

The result was so gratifying to the royal patron that he formed a company, to which King Charles II. granted a charter, incorporating it as the "Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay," securing to them the sole trade and commerce of all those seas, straits, bays,

rivers, lakes, creeks, and sounds, in whatsoever latitude they shall be, that lie within the entrance of the straits commonly called Hudson's Straits, together with all the lands and territories upon the countries, coasts and confines of the seas, bays, etc., aforesaid, that are not already actually possessed by or granted to any of our subjects, or possessed by the subjects of any other Christian prince or state."

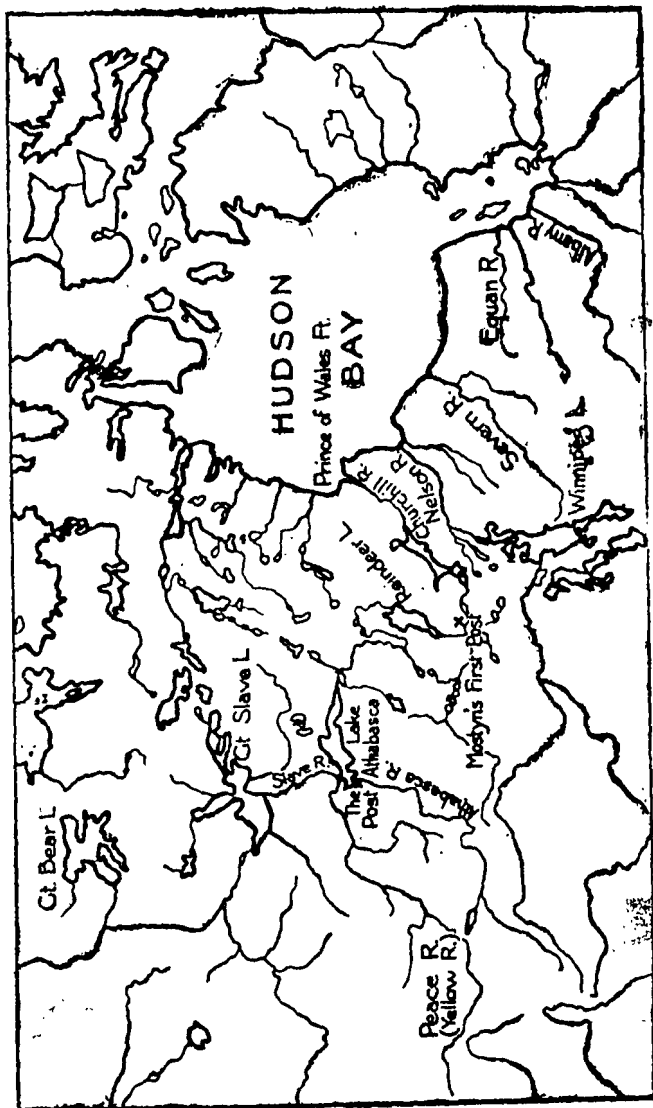
In addition to the lordship, the legislative, judicial, and executive power within these vague limits (which the Hudson Bay Company eventually accepted as meaning all lands watered by streams flowing into Hudson Bay), the corporation was given the right to "the whole and entire trade and traffic to and from all havens, bays, creeks, rivers, lakes, and seas into which they shall find entrance or passage by water or land out of the territories, limits, or places aforesaid." The first settlements in the country which was thus given to the Hudson Bay Company and was to be known as Rupert's Land, were made on James Bay and at Churchill and Hayes Rivers; but it was a long time before there was any advance into the interior.

From the very commencement there had been conflict between the Frenchmen around Montreal and the English on the shores of the great Bay; time after time the forts had been

attacked and captured, only to be recaptured. Rival traders warred grimly in the great wild wastes. Indians were intrigued with, but all the while the Hudson Bay Company was making huge profits. Naturally, there were those at home who looked with envy upon the thriving trade and wished to find an opportunity to share the prosperity. Ingenious folk thought they had found that opportunity, and an attempt was made in the English Parliament to deprive the Hudson Bay Company of its monopoly on the ground that it had not used its charter, having failed to penetrate into the country. That was in 1749, and it had acted as a spur to the Hudson Bay Company for a while. But time slipped by and slackness came again; and meanwhile Canada had been ceded to Great Britain in 1763, and the fur-traders of that country, most of them free lances, had eventually joined together and formed the North-West Fur Company of Montreal.

Never was there such fiery rivalry as existed between these two companies, and the Hudson Bay Company, seemingly, was losing its ascendancy. It was this which had aroused Henry Mostyn, and the complaint of those in far-off England, voiced by Captain Corrington, had served to inflame his enthusiasm for the Company of which he was so proud to be a servant. Hence his youthful outspokenness and his insistence on something being done to





SKETCH MAP OF THE TERRITORY TRAVERSED BY THE FUR TRADERS.

save the reputation and to ensure the prosperity of the Hudson Bay Company.

And when he reviewed the happenings of the past few hours, and what had been the result, he was not sorry that he had raised his voice. In his heart he was resolved that the Hudson Bay Company should rise supreme from the struggle.

He was up betimes next morning, and during breakfast spoke to Blaine about the matter.

"Tom," he said seriously, "I've been thinking. The North-West men, although they started a month before us, have farther to go; but, even at that, it will be a race between us. I suggest we start early every morning and keep on till after sundown. We must get to the Nelson first."

"All right, Henry," Blaine replied, "I'm with you in whatever you want to do."

It was agreed, therefore, to press the journey, and for over a fortnight the sleighs slithered along, over frozen swamps, ice-covered rivers, until they came to a rocky barren country, where the going was hard. In that fortnight, some hundred and eighty miles had been covered without any unforeseen incident, or anything to mar progress. True, it had been rigorous travelling, because the wind was nearly all the time against them, and at night, since the snow was so solidly frozen that it was impossible to throw up wind-breaks, the white

men and their Indian companions had to sleep unsheltered from the biting north snap. They did not mind for themselves so much as for their dogs, who, poor beasts, stood or lay throughout the cold nights; the best that could be done for them was to pile the sleighs to windward, and behind these the dogs got what shelter they could.

Now, entering into the rocky barren country, the difficulties increased; before, there had been some small deer which the Indians had killed and so provided fresh meat; and there had also been trees, from the wood of which fires were built to cook and give needed warmth. But now the game was lacking, there were no trees, the way was difficult, and the sleighs bumped and dragged heavily on the dogs, so that the men had to harness themselves and help in the dreadful task.

"See, moose go this way!"—Eagle's Claw pointed to the double row of crescent marks on the hard snow—"Meat, brother!"

"What do you say, Tom?" Henry queried of Blaine. "Shall we go after it? Judging by the signs it's only a mile or so in front of us, and as the dogs are pretty well done for to-day we might give them a rest."

"Just as you like, Henry," was Blaine's reply.

"Come on, then," said the young leader. "You, Hawk Eye and Red Cloud, stay mind

the dogs, and get a fire going. We get fresh meat to-night!"

The two Indians grunted assent, and together Mostyn, Blaine, and Eagle's Claw, who went by virtue of the fact that he had picked up the trail of the moose, set off in their snow-shoes over the white ground.

"Heem big bull," grunted Eagle's Claw, after they had been going for some while and had covered about three miles. He pointed to the marks, which were sunken deep.

"Then we'll get plenty of meat," was Henry's reply. "It's a good job he's running into the wind, else we'd never catch him. Hallo! Where's the trail?"

The way till then had lain along smooth ground, and just before had led up a hill, on the face of which the trail was clearly marked. They were now, however, standing on the edge of a shelf of rock, where the marks ended abruptly, and the hill fell away sharply.

Down on to his knees went the Indian, working back and forth looking for the lost trail, but not finding it.

"Moose jump!" he said at last. "We go back round hill," and, striking down the hill again, knowing the others would follow, he led them to the very foot of the hill and, racing on in advance, endeavoured to find the trail on the snow, which, at this part, was as hard and glossy as ice. But, though there were no marks on

the ground, amongst the small stumpy shrubs were signs clear as the day to Eagle's Claw, and Mostyn and Blaine, now quite half a mile behind him, heard his call and hastened forward. Meanwhile the Indian was racing on, and presently came to where the snow-trail lay disclosed again. It led straight across a wide stretch of even country, towards a wood, and Eagle's Claw knew that in all probability the moose was going there for the night. Impetuous, with the urge of the hunter sweeping through him, the red man went on, not waiting for his companions to come up with him, and yet knowing they would follow, guided by the trail left by his snow-shoes.

He was now on the edge of the wood, and turning for a brief moment, saw Mostyn and Blaine coming along in wide sweeping movements. Then he went into the wood, slithered along between the trees for some distance, and wellnigh fell over the recumbent form of the great beast which he had been tracking these past three hours over fifteen miles.

Eagle's Claw sprang back, for he had not been expecting this, and as he did so, the great moose scrambled to its feet; but before it could get erect the Indian had raised his musket. The bark of it awoke the echoes in the stillness, and the moose, with a cough of rage, was on its feet, charging down at the red man, whose aim had not been true for the spot just behind

the head, with the result that the heavy ball had plunged into the animal's flank, only serving to anger him.

With head down, the moose came stamping towards Eagle's Claw, who, chagrined at his failure, leaped nimbly to one side, dodging behind a tree, where he reloaded his piece. Even while he was ramming the shot home, the moose swept round, coming up behind the tree; and the Indian, turning, saw the brute at the charge again. Before ever he could fire, however, the animal was upon him, his wide-spreading antlers catching the musket, sending it flying into space and the Indian down to his knees.

For all the terror of the moment, Eagle's Claw was not scared, but, drawing his long, keen-edged knife, gave an upward thrust at his antagonist, slashing it at the throat. With another enraged cry the moose stamped the ground, seeming to be determined to trample his enemy underfoot; but the Indian was not there. Even as he drew back his knife, he had wriggled from under the towering monster; and, brave man that he was, raced to where his musket lay, then stood waiting for a further onslaught. He scorned to flee, after all that had happened; quickly seeing to the priming of his piece, he raised it to his shoulder; but even as he fired the moose, with a cry of pain and rage, was upon him. The Indian's shot

went high above the animal, and for the second time the red man staggered back, almost tumbling to the ground, but yet, with wits working quickly, side-stepping so that his opponent went charging past. And at that moment a shot rang out, Eagle's Claw heard a bellow of pain, looked sharply round, and saw the moose lying on the ground, with the blood from a wound in the neck dyeing the snow red, while towards it Mostyn came racing, with a shout of glee on his lips.

"Just in time, I reckon, brother," the white man said. "I saw your gun go up as the beast came at you, and thought you were surely done. Thank goodness, you weren't!"

"Eagle's Claw thanks his white brother for that," said the red man, and then made no other reference to Mostyn's shot in the nick of time—the shot that he knew had probably saved his life.

"Why, look here, Tom," Henry cried, as Blaine, who had been outstripped by his comrade, came up, "this has been a fight between antlers and knife," and he pointed to the great slash made by the red man's knife. "Come, tell us about it," he turned to Eagle's Claw, and, reluctantly and very briefly, the Indian recounted the story of what had happened in those few minutes.

"Meat last long time!" he said simply, when he had finished, and set to work to skin the

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brute, while Henry and Blaine assisted him to cut off the choicest portions. Then, when the evening was drawing in, the three men began the long march back to camp, where they received a fine welcome, and had a good meal of the freshly killed meat.



## CHAPTER III

### THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

It was a good thing for the travellers that the moose had been caught, for it was the last game they saw, and they conserved the meat during the days that followed as they went on through the barren lands. Every day was much as another—the long journey, small meals, cheerless camps—though fortunately, for a while, nothing happened to disturb the traders. Then came a day when, having mounted a steep pass, and being in the descent, Mostyn's sleigh, catching on a boulder, pitched him headlong down the precipice which they were skirting.

With a shout of alarm, Henry went flying into space, the sleighs behind him pulling up instantly to avoid crashing into the piled-up sleigh from which the leader had been hurled. There was a rush of men on snow-shoes, Blaine leading, and not a man of them but expected to see Mostyn lying a huddled heap in the gorge below.

Instead, they saw him clinging desperately to a stunted growth, which had found bare sustenance on the rocky mountain-side. On

his face agony was written, and it was evident to the men above him that he could not hold on very long.

Eagle's Claw, the Chippewayan, who drove the sleigh immediately behind Mostyn and was a faithful henchman of the young trader, dashed back to his sleigh, flung packs hither and thither, found what he sought, and rushed back to the little band which was still wondering what was to be done.

"Queeklee!" he cried. "Me go breeng heem!" and even while they looked at him he was fastening the rope round his armpits. They saw his intention, and fell to immediately, so that in a few moments Eagle's Claw was ready. "Heem rock hold," he cried, pointing to a big boulder, round which one end of the rope was made fast, and then, with Blaine looking over the edge and the other three red men hanging on to the life-line, Eagle's Claw eased himself over the edge of the precipice, and, when the moment to do so came, let go.

"Now!" shouted Blaine, and inch by inch the men let out the rope, working according to the shouted instructions of Blaine, who saw the manner of Eagle's Claw's descent. There was little fear of the rope breaking, for it was made of stout thong, as also was the second rope that the red man had in his hand, the loose end of which was also coiled round the great boulder up above.

The precipice stood up sheer, and no man could have scaled it, least of all a man with a sprained ankle. Henry, lying there in agony, felt the tears come into his eyes as he saw Eagle's Claw come swinging down on the rope and realised what his intention was.

The Indian alighted on a ledge just above the point where Mostyn hung, and shouting out to those above to hold on, quickly got to work. Bending over on the narrow ledge, and only prevented from falling by the rope round him, he hung perilously, head downwards, and hitched his second rope under Mostyn's arms.

"Soon up," he said simply, as he proceeded to fasten the knot.

"Thank you, O brother," was all that Mostyn said; he knew that one did not have to make a great show of thanks with these red men, and he knew that Eagle's Claw would be annoyed if he should do so.

Having made sure that the knot would hold, the Indian signed to Blaine, who was still looking down the precipice, and a second or so later Mostyn felt himself being drawn up and up. Round and round the rope spun him, and to avoid being crushed against the side he had to stretch out his hands and hold himself off.

"Why on earth doesn't Blaine tell them to go slower?" he muttered, and hailed the youth above. "Take it easier, Tom! I'll be brained on these jutting rocks!"



Without a word to him, Blaine turned and called out to the Indians, and immediately the up-going Mostyn noticed the difference. As for Blaine, he scowled. Deep in his heart he had been hoping that Mostyn was too dazed to be able to call out at all. ~~He~~ He purposely did not warn the Indians, for the young trader, judging that this was the time to play his cards, had hoped that what Mostyn feared might happen! For, during all those days of apparent friendliness, Blaine had been nursing old grievances and had been plotting to bring about the failure which he and his father intended should fall upon Mostyn.

"This will save suspicion ever falling on me," was Blaine's first thought when he saw Henry fly over the edge. "I can turn back, and vow that it was impossible to go any farther."

Then, when Eagle's Claw so gallantly came to the rescue, Blaine's hope had been that Mostyn would be dashed to pieces against the rock, and he had told the Indians to pull quickly.

And now he was frustrated. In face of Mostyn's warning, he had to ease up, although, had it not been for Eagle's Claw, Blaine might not have done so. The truth was that he was afraid of Eagle's Claw, who, he knew, was devoted to Mostyn, and Blaine's great anxiety all through was how to deal with the Indian.

He dared not resort to open murder, either of the red man or of Mostyn; for he knew, if he did that, the vengeance of the Hudson Bay men would follow him wherever he went. He was relying upon subtler methods than that.

Mostyn's head appeared above the edge, and, hiding his chagrin, Blaine assisted him on to the pass. When this was done, Eagle's Claw was hauled up. A quick examination of Mostyn's leg revealed the fact that he had sprained his ankle. Eagle's Claw, with rough skill, soon attended to it, while the others turned their attention to the overturned sleigh, got it righted, and then came back for orders.

Blaine, who had now, by Mostyn's instructions, taken command, told them to lift the injured youth on to the hindmost sleigh, Blaine himself travelling on Mostyn's in the van, with his own leader in the train.

"Go ahead!" said Mostyn pluckily. "I can keep Blacknose on the trail after you, never fear!"

And so the sleighs went on their way down the tortuous path, and out on more level ground, though still all was as barren as a desert. Henry, lying on his sleigh, was in agony; but he was grimly determined to see the thing through, and, after all, there was not much else to do, with the Fort wellnigh two hundred miles behind.

"I'll be quite well before the spring," he muttered between clenched teeth, in his mind's eye seeing the great gathering of Indians as they came down the Nelson with the heavily laden canoes, and the rapid bartering of pelts for blankets, tobacco, knives, and what not.

He was thinking of all this when, with much slipping along the hard frozen surface, the dogs came to a standstill. Henry had been lying down, guiding the dogs by his voice, Blacknose obeying immediately every shouted command, and the other animals responding to the leader's call upon them—and, as he lifted his head, Mostyn saw that the sleighs in front had also come to rest.

"We'll camp down now for the night, Henry," called Blaine, as he jumped off his sleigh. "We'll get some shelter behind these rocks," and he waved his hand towards the huge boulders lying all about.

For the next half-hour all was bustle as the red men saw to the dogs, placing them behind the rocks, and then turning to the work of building a tiny fire, as big as was possible with the few sticks they could find. Eagle's Claw came along to Mostyn, lifted him off the sleigh, and then helped him along to the natural wind-break where the fire glowed cheerfully, for all it was so small.

Blaine, afraid that he might have revealed that afternoon more than he intended, was

affability itself, and his white companion was not a little grateful to him for his tenderness when seeing to the injured ankle.

"'Tis bad fortune, Tom," Henry said glumly while this was proceeding. "Thank goodness, we shall not be many days before we reach the river!"

"I don't know about that, Henry," Blaine answered. "You see, comrade, we're in the worst part of the country now. Red Cloud"—referring to one of the Indian guides—"Red Cloud says that between here and the Reindeer Lake there's no trail, and that he only of our Indians knows the way; and it's stark, man, stark of food. And we haven't much left!"

"And we haven't tasted fresh meat for over ten days!" muttered Henry. "The dogs must be feeling hungry too. And I thought we came away with sufficient. Wasn't everything on the stores sleigh when you looked over it?"

"It was," said Blaine. "But I've just been looking over it, and we must have lost a lot travelling over those mountains, though I didn't notice it."

"Then you should have done!" exclaimed Henry angrily. It was the first time since they had set out that he had complained of anything, but this—this was really serious. Everything depended upon the stores. "You were bringing up immediately behind the stores sleigh then." Mostyn went on.

"I know," said Blaine, and he looked extremely penitent. "I——"

"How long will the grub we've got last out?" Henry demanded curtly.

"I reckon about six days, going on short rations, and——"

"It will take us how long to get to the lake?" the other pressed. Despite his pain, he was all attention now; he saw that the success of his expedition depended on seeing this matter right, and reaching the lake, where the forests would no doubt provide food.

"Red Cloud reckons about a fortnight at the least," Blaine told him. "No, wait a minute, Henry," as he saw his companion about to speak. "Wait a minute! After we've had supper, I'm going back along the trail to see if I can find any of the missing packs."

"Don't be a fool!" cried Henry. "You'll never find any, and besides, it's going to snow in an hour or two. Look over there!" And he pointed to the heavy cloud-bank to the north.

"I don't care," said Blaine firmly. "It's my fault and I'm going. Red Cloud and Tonka will come with me, and we'll take the biggest sleigh—we can empty it for the present. Anyway, it's only a matter of a few miles; we'll be back by midday to-morrow."

Mostyn did his utmost to persuade Blaine



not to go on the foolhardy trip back along the trail, but nothing would make the latter swerve from his determination, and, in his secret heart, Henry admired him for it—it was much about the same as he himself would have done, had he been so culpable.

Supper over, Blaine chose the freshest of the dogs—picking amongst others Blacknose, who, however, when harnessed, seeing that his master was not going with him, refused to take to the collar, despite all the coaxing and threatening of Blaine.

“Come up, you dirty-nosed brute,” exclaimed Blaine at last, advancing towards the dog.

Mostyn, lying on his blanket, saw his comrade lift his whip, saw the anger on his face, and called out quickly:

“Drop that, Tom!”

It was as much a warning as a threat—which, however, Blaine did not heed; and ere the whip descended, Blacknose, held though he was by the harness, leaped as far as he could, and it was far enough to send Blaine jumping back before the snarling brute.

His harsh treatment of dogs was one of the things for which Henry had always detested Blaine, and now that he had dared to raise the whip in anger against Blacknose, the boy could not suppress his anger.

“If you ever raise a whip to him again, I’ll—I’ll thong you!” he cried, raising himself

on his elbow. "Take him off; he'll never go with you now!"

There was that in Henry's voice which made Blaine turn white with fury.

"You can take your vicious hound," he cried, "I wouldn't drive him for a load of pelts; and, as for you—you——" He pulled himself up sharp, fearing lest he should betray that which was in his mind, and turning to Eagle's Claw called out: "Get this brute out of the harness, and put my leader in."

Released from the collar, Blacknose stood still for a second or so, and then seemed about to spring at Blaine; a word from Henry, however, brought him up quickly, and he trotted over to his master and shoved his muzzle in his face.

"Quiet, Blacknose, quiet!" Henry said, stroking the cold head, and the dog lay down beside him, though he kept his eyes upon the man who had dared to raise the whip at him.

The red man had lifted a large portion of the packs off the biggest sleigh, to which the dogs were now harnessed, and with a curt "Good night!" Blaine flicked his whip, and with the two Indians sitting behind him started the dogs at a steady trot.

Mostyn lay listening to the tinkling of the bells, which gradually died away in the distance, and then, when there was nothing else to listen

to, he rolled himself up in his blanket and, with a cheery "Good night!" to Eagle's Claw and Hawk Eye, went off to sleep.

The first watch that night was kept by Eagle's Claw, who, at midnight, surrendered the post to Hawk Eye. In less than two minutes Eagle's Claw was fast asleep, to jump up with a start—he did not know how long afterwards—awakened by something which he knew ought not to be.

And he saw Hawk Eye just about to spring on to one of the sleighs, to which more than its share of dogs was harnessed.

With a shout of alarm and wonder, Eagle's Claw bounded from his blanket towards Hawk Eye, who, turning quickly, made a movement with his right hand, and, in the fitful light given off by the fire, Henry, waking at the Indian's shout, saw something glitter.

"Look out!" he cried, but he was too late. Eagle's Claw had flung himself at Hawk Eye—to fall back with an exclamation of pain. The other red man's blade had caught him in the right shoulder at the same time as, with a quick movement, his left leg had gone up and the knee been planted in the pit of Eagle's Claw's stomach. Down went the unfortunate Indian with a groan, and, before he could pick himself up, Hawk Eye had leaped on to the sleigh, and, using his whip freely, was driving the dogs at full pelt over the snow, heading through



the darkness in the direction taken by Blaine some hours earlier.

Mostyn had watched the scene in amazement, and, forgetting his ankle, made to rise and go to the assistance of his red comrade, only to fall back with a groan.

"Hawk Eye! Hawk Eye!" he cried then, "what does this mean?"

For answer, the Indian, who was then some yards away, called back jeeringly:

"I go where food is!"

And the night rang with his laugh.

Eagle's Claw was by this time on his feet again, and despite the pain of his wound, from which the blood was pouring, began to run after the rapidly moving sleigh, which was now lost in the darkness. No sound of jingling bells came, for Hawk Eye had carefully and quietly taken every one off the dogs. But the keen hearing of Eagle's Claw took him along the trail of the sleigh, and he ran for well-nigh a mile, unheeding the calls which Mostyn sent after him.

Going like the wind, yet silently as the grave, he came up to the sleigh, made a wide detour so that he should come abreast the man in front of it, and then bore down straight for it. Not before he was within a yard did Hawk Eye see him, and then he was too late. With a shout Eagle's Claw sprang high into the air, to descend with a thump upon the sleigh, his

arms, as he fell, encircling Hawk Eye. The suddenness of the attack took the traitor by surprise, and the two men went headlong off the sleigh on to the hard ground. Then, while the dogs were racing away, the men fought hard and long, grimly, as only the red men can fight. Neither spoke a word; it was a silent battle. Ordinarily the men were well matched, but, owing to the loss of blood and the run after the sleigh, Eagle's Claw was no match for his opponent, though he put up a gallant fight. Both were using their knives now, for Mostyn's faithful red man knew that this was no matter for easy dealing with, but real earnest, a matter of life and death for him and his master.

After the first few minutes of the contest, Hawk Eye managed to wrench himself free of his foe, and then began a fight in the darkness, the two men creeping round and round, each waiting for the chance he could not see, but hoped to hear, of springing in to the attack with his keen-edged knife. Only the slither of the snow-shoes over the snow—the panting of the two men—broke the silence, until, with an “Ugh!” scarcely breathed, Eagle's Claw sprang and drove his blade at Hawk Eye. The latter, however, was too nimble for him, and slipped to one side. Then, before Eagle's Claw could recover his balance, Hawk Eye had flung himself on to his back; there was a low cry from the other, and down he went on

to the snow-covered ground, the blood dyeing the whiteness—the while that Hawk Eye, giving him a vicious kick, bounded away into the night, running like a hare after his sleigh.

When Eagle's Claw came back to consciousness, the dawn was breaking, though a driving snow-storm hid the sky from sight. Aching in every limb, and with his right arm stiff and causing him, although he had been used to bear almost infinite pain, to grimace and twinge whenever he moved it, the Indian scrambled to his feet, the events through which he had passed in the night hours coming back to him slowly.

His first thought was for Mostyn, and, without even staying to bind up the wounded arm, or to think of what might be the cause of the dreadful pain in his back, Eagle's Claw began to move up and down, trying to pick up the trail. The snow must have been falling for some time, for there was a covering over everything, but the red man scraped away the soft new snow, seeking the marks of the sleigh's runners, which he hoped would not yet have disappeared. But he found them not. They had been erased by the softer, wetter snow. For over fifty yards Eagle's Claw scraped away the snow with his left hand, scraped it from a wide stretch, though he had a fair idea, now that he remembered everything, that the fight had taken place in the very tracks of the sleigh, and

that he and his foe had not, even in their circling, gone far aside.

When he found his search in vain in one direction, the Indian went back to where he had started from, and began the same work in the other direction. Yet no sign of the sleigh's trail did he find, but instead—here and there—patches of red under the top snow.

And he knew that he was picking up the trail of his own blood—the blood which had flowed from his wounded shoulder as he ran.

Then he began a dreadful journey. He did not know how far he had come from the camp, and, for one thing, he had to remember the wide detour he had made. Painfully, slowly, he crawled over the snow, sweeping it away with his uninjured hand, picking up here and there the red trail. Loss of blood and the hours of exposure, however, had told on Eagle's Claw more than he realised, and after about half an hour of this labour, in which he had covered but a hundred yards or so, he began to feel weary—wanted to lie down and sleep for ever—wanted to go to the Hunting Grounds of the Brave.

He dropped down at last, and closed his eyes, to come round as he felt something warm against his cheek, and, opening his eyes, saw Blacknose standing over him, shoving his muzzle against his face.

Pulling himself together with a mighty effort,

Eagle's Claw got upon his feet; even his dulled senses told him that he was safe now, since Blacknose had come. The dog jumped up at him with joy, and then, very soberly, turned and began to trot across the snow. The Indian followed him as rapidly as he could, staggering at every step; and in this way did Blacknose lead back to the camp the brave red comrade of Henry Mostyn.

A shout of glee greeted the appearance of dog and man. With a last effort Eagle's Claw dragged himself over to where his master lay, and then fell, exhausted and unconscious.

"That's better, brother," said Henry Mostyn an hour afterwards, as the Indian opened his eyes. During that hour the white youth had been doing his utmost to arouse the Indian, and at last succeeded, to his great relief. "That's better. Now drink this," and he held a pannikin of steaming drink which he had made over the fire that he had kept going by painfully "crawling to stunted growths some distance away.

He watched his comrade while he drank the warming food; he did not ask a question about what had happened out there in the night, but because, while the red man slept, he had bound up the ugly wound in the back just below the ribs, he knew that there had been a grim struggle, grimmer even than the fight which



had left Eagle's Claw with a knife-thrust in his shoulder; and he knew too that the Indian would presently tell him.

With a grunt, Eagle's Claw put down the dish.

"Me like old squaw," he said fiercely. "Me no brave! The North Lands ring with the shame of Eagle's Claw."

He was silent for a moment or so, and Henry did not prompt him. He knew that the Indian was bewailing defeat, as he also knew that that defeat meant the loss of those dogs and the sleigh, with its burden, with which Hawk Eye had gone off.

"Me trail Hawk Eye, spring like a lynx, we roll on ground, we fight, and Hawk Eye drive heem long knife in back—he keeck me—*keeck* Eagle's Claw whose wigwam hangs with t'ousand scalps!"

The Indian's hand clenched and unclenched as he thought of it, his eyes gleamed. Mostyn waited patiently, saying never a word.

Then Eagle's Claw took up the thread of his story, and told Henry of all that had happened, right up to the time when he sank a second time in the snow, and woke to find Blacknose licking his face.

"Then, heem bring me back," the Indian finished up, "but Hawk Eye, he gone, and Eagle's Claw no can stop heem!"

"But you tried, brother," said Henry quietly,

as he reached out his hand and gripped the sound one of the Indian. "You tried. It is not your fault. But listen, brother. There is something in this that is worse than the treachery of Hawk Eye. After you raced like the hare after Hawk Eye, and would not come though I called you loudly, I went down in a swoon, having tried to hobble after you, fool that I was! When I came round, it was within an hour of dawn, and I called you, but got no answer. No answer came to me but the echo of my own voice. And I knew, brother, that you had not come back, and I feared for you. So I called Blacknose and sent him seeking you. While he had gone I built up the fire."

Eagle's Claw looked at him, but said nothing, though he was thinking of the agony his young white friend must have suffered, dragging himself over the snow.

And then I counted the dogs that remained, and besides Blacknose there are—are—three. When dawn came, something about the largest sleigh struck me as strange, and inspecting it I found—know you what I found, Eagle's Claw?" he demanded.

"I know, for I see!" exclaimed the Indian: "The runners gone!"

"And, on top of it, brother, I found this," said Mostyn, and he held up a piece of paper, from which he began to read:—

"I've gone, Mostyn, you fool, gone, and taken nearly all the food, the best of the dogs, and after me Hawk Eye will come with most of the others. Those that are left you can do with as you like, but they'll never get you to Reindeer Lake or the Churchill River. I've left you piles of trade goods, but they'll do you little good, I think! As for me, I'm going to the North-West Company. You didn't know, of course, that Red Cloud had led you wrongly; there is no trail from here to the lake, even if the dogs could take you."

"You know what that means, Eagle's Claw?" Henry asked.

"Me know," the red man answered. "The white cur has left his brother to—to—hark!—the white man has left his brother to the wolves!"

And from somewhere out behind the curtain of snow there came the long-drawn howl of a wolf-pack.

## CHAPTER IV

### BESIEGED AND RELIEVED

THE white man and his red brother looked at each other for a moment in silence, listening to the far-off baying of the wolves. Eagle's Claw lifted his left hand, from which he had taken the glove, wetted his fingers, and held them aloft.

"We in wind," he said quietly. "They find us soon. We get ready."

He moved towards the two sleighs, calling the dogs as he went. Mostyn knew what the red man was going to do. Lying there, unable himself to help him, Henry was utterly miserable. He knew with what agony Eagle's Claw must be working, as he lifted heavy bales from the sleighs and piled them up to form a wall—two walls, in fact—as the sleighs themselves were dragged into position to make two other walls of the little fort which Mostyn knew the Indian was constructing. At best, it would be scarcely breast-high, but it would be some kind of shelter, while the tiny fire in the centre of it might serve to hold off the wolves, if they

should come. Determined that he would do something, the white youth crawled over to the little patch of shrubs and with his big knife cut wellnigh every bit of them, carrying the twigs, in small armfuls, to the barricade. Many journeys were necessary, and Eagle's Claw tried to get his companion to leave the task for him when the fort was finished. But Henry persisted, and by the time that the red man had everything ready, he also had completed his task, and a fair-sized heap of twigs lay ready for the fire.

Then, and then only, did Mostyn think of muskets and powder and shot. With an exclamation of alarm, he called out:

"Where are the muskets, Eagle's Claw?" and there was a great fear in his heart lest the despicable white man who had deserted his comrades—that unpardonable sin of the wilds—had completed his fell work by carrying off all weapons. Henry had known that, when Blaine left, the musket he always had by his side at night was not missing; but the events of the night, and his own condition, had been such that he had really taken it for granted that the musket was there. Until he recovered from his swoon, he had, of course, no suspicion of the treachery of Blaine, and had imagined that Hawk Eye, tired of the long journey, and perhaps his cupidity aroused by the knowledge that the sleigh was laden with valuable

merchandise, had seized the opportunity of Blaine's absence and Mostyn's incapacity to make off, knowing, no doubt, of some encampment for which he could make. Now, however, with dire necessity and danger before them, Henry had bethought himself of arms, and no man was ever more relieved than he when Eagle's Claw looked up and said:

"It is well, brother; the white fox took not our arms. See, and here are powder and shot!"

He pointed to where he had gathered weapons and ammunition together, and Henry felt that he could almost forgive Blaine for his cowardly desertion.

The work of preparing defence had taken a long time, but at last it was finished. The dogs—all of them but Blacknose showing evident signs of fear as the dreadful howling drew nearer and nearer—had been placed in the lee of one of the sleighs, and the two men took up position to await the coming of the terror of the wilds.

Henry, scarcely able now to bear the pain of his ankle, lay on top of two bales of blankets, with Eagle's Claw standing beside him, both men facing the point at which they judged the wolves could come. The baying, yelping pack could not be far off now, they knew, although, despite the fact that the snow had long ceased to fall and the air was clear, they could not yet

see them. The dogs howled dismally and cringed, Blacknose being the only one who showed no sign of terror. He stood, poised as though for battle, by the side of Henry; once he lifted his head, wolf-fashion, and howled as though hurling defiance at the coming foes.

"Down!" his master said, reaching and patting his head. "Hallo! here they come!" he said to the Indian, and following his pointing hand, Eagle's Claw saw a black moving patch far off on the white vastness.

"We'd better hold our fire till they're nearer," Henry said, and it was only then that he remembered again that his comrade had a wounded shoulder. While the Indian had been shifting the big bales the white youth had known it, but it had not occurred to him then that the Indian was likely to be of little use in the handling of a musket.

"You'd better do the loading for me, brother," he said to the red man. "You can't shoot with that——"

"Me shoot!" was all the Indian said, and there was a ring of determination in his voice.

Henry, looking at him, saw the mouth shut tightly and the eyes gleam. He knew it was no use arguing with Eagle's Claw when he looked like that.

Two muskets apiece the comrades had, and a heavy pistol each. These were all ready

primed, and one musket and the pistol lay by the side of each of them, with a plentiful supply of ammunition.

Yard by yard that moving patch advanced, until at last it was so near that Mostyn could count the wolves.

"Thirty!" he muttered, and then with "Now!" he let fly. At the same instant Eagle's Claw fired, and the two foremost wolves sprang up into the air with never a sound, then tumbled heapishly on the ground. Instantly there was a snarling rush on the part of their companions, and a terrible scrimmage took place as the wolves fought for the bodies. It was an opportunity not to be missed, and the two men in the improvised fort fired again, and yet again; and each shot found a billet.

"That accounts for six," Henry said grimly, as he reloaded his pieces. "We must adopt new tactics now, brother. One must fire and the other hold till he has reloaded. We may be able to keep them off longer that way."

The Indian nodded, but said nothing. It was plain to see that he was suffering dreadfully with the pain in the shoulder; each time he lifted his musket his face twitched and he bit his lips to keep back the cry of agony.

"Let me do the firing for a while!" Henry implored him, but Eagle's Claw shook his head and, being reloaded first, banged away at the wolves, who, even in those few minutes, had



finished the feast provided for them and were advancing again

By the time the red man had fired his three shots, the beasts seemed to have realised that there was some connection between that awful crash and spurt of flame, and stinging wounds; for this time, although no wolf went down, three of them drew up on their haunches and howled, for the shots had wounded them. The others stampeded away, followed presently by their limping companions, on whom the men did not trouble to waste more ammunition, since it was clear they could do but little and would be but a small menace.

"They'll come back presently," said Henry, "and probably from another point."

He was right. After a lull of nearly half an hour the brutish warriors, evidently recovered from their fright, returned to the attack and came on in that curious "lolloping" bound characteristic of them, and when they were but a short distance from the fort, divided company, one party making for the same point as before and the other making for another one. Without a word, Eagle's Claw slipped from his position and raced to the side where the new attack would come. Henry knew that he was there just in time, for a moment or so later, while he himself was reloading after potting at the wolves on his side, he heard the crash of the Indian's musket, and then another. Howls of

pain came from both quarters, and although Mostyn could not see what had happened in the band of wolves opposed to the Indian, for his own part he saw a brute go over on its back and lie kicking there, while a second one, after a convulsive leap, lay still and silent.

But the rest came on, and Henry saw their green eyes rolling hungrily. He shivered involuntarily, but it was not because of the cold. Reloading as rapidly as possible, he fired again and yet again, but was less successful this time; and then, before he had space to load up again, the wolves were up against the wall of bales. Not all of the little band were there, however, for some had remained behind to fight over the body of their dead companion. But there were nevertheless enough for one man to tackle. Henry's pistol barked, a wolf went howling away, and the flash of fire so close to them seemed to cow the others, for they bounded back yelping. The respite gave Henry time to finish the loading of his muskets, and, before the wolves had time to recover from their fright, he had pumped two shots amongst them, so that they fled precipitately.

But the fight was not at an end. The feasters had finished, and came pelting across the reddened snow. Four of them there were, and they seemed to be pitting themselves against one another; a big she-wolf was first, and she sprang at the boy, who, clubbing his musket as he

raised himself into a sitting position on his bales, brought it down with a terrific whack upon the beast's nose. The force of the blow wellnigh sent Henry pitching off his perch, but fortunately he managed to regain his balance as the wolf dropped yelping when at the height of its spring, crashing into another one which was about to leap. While these two snarled and fought together, the other couple flung themselves at the youth—actually they leaped right over the wall into the fort.

Unable as he was to get off his seat, Henry turned sharply, expecting to have the beasts on him immediately; but instead, he saw something which set his blood a-tingling. Blacknose (who had been a snarling listener to the battle) had seen the wolves come over the fort wall, and instantly sprang to the attack. Half wolf himself, but with all the faithfulness of a dog to his master, Blacknose knew that his master was in danger, and he would fight for him till all strength was gone.

His teeth bit deep into the neck of the first wolf over, and they scuffled round and round in the fort, the wolf yelping viciously, but the dog keeping silent as death, never relinquishing his grip, even when the second wolf entered the fray and sought to get his dripping jaw deep into the body of the strange white beast. He got no chance, however, of coming to grips for a while, and Blacknose and the first wolf held

the arena to themselves. Blacknose's long jaws were of tremendous strength, and his instinct told him not to let go. From the very first it was patent to Mostyn, as he watched in fascination, that the wolf was doomed, and he loaded his pistol quickly, took aim, and fired at the wolf which was dashing in and out of the duellists; down went the brute, and almost at the same instant the pressure being exerted by Blacknose told, his antagonist sagged in the relentless grip, the dog shook the beast and then dropped its carcass.

That fight was over, and meanwhile Eagle's Claw had been having his struggle, in the course of which he shot down three of his foes, cracked another in the middle of the back and smashed its spine, while the rest went helter-skelter across the snow, to rejoin the others whom Mostyn had sent fleeing.

"Me no think they come back yet, brother," the Indian said coolly, as he turned to look at Henry, and saw for the first time the two wolves that had succeeded in getting inside the fort.

Henry told him what had happened, and the red man spoke to Blacknose, at which the dog strolled over to him, and had his muzzle rubbed.

"I don't think we shall get off so cheaply as that," said Mostyn. "They're bound to come back, if I know anything about wolves!"

"They come when night come," said Eagle's

Claw, and he proved right, for although during the rest of that day the two comrades remained in the stockade, except when the red man went out to gather more twigs against the coming night, not a sign of a living wolf did they see until after supper.

Meanwhile, Henry and his companion had been discussing the situation.

"What are we to do?" the white youth asked. "I'm utterly lost in this region, and——"

"But Eagle's Claw know," said the red man. "That white fox"—and he made a gesture of disgust as he spoke of Blaine—"that white fox say Red Cloud know trail, but me know. He lie, too, when he say Red Cloud take wrong trail. He take right trail. Me know where Reindeer Lake."

Henry looked at him in astonishment; he knew that Eagle's Claw was one of the best Indian trackers the Company had at Fort Prince of Wales, but he was astonished that the Indian had known of what Blaine told him.

"I hear heem tell you," said Eagle's Claw, as he read Henry's face. "And me say he lie—lake there!"—and he pointed to the west. "No more t'an seex march! We go?"

"But the dogs!—we've but four dogs, and three of those the worst," answered Henry.

"Still, we'll go, even though we have to leave

the best part of the goods behind, which I suppose is what Blaine thought we'd do if we were foolhardy enough to try to march with so few dogs and me unable to pull. We'll go, surely, brother!"—and the white boy's face lighted up with grim determination. "We must rest to-day, though, and I must see to your wounds."

So, resting one at a time, after Henry had attended to Eagle's Claw's wounds, the two spent that day; and after supper the boy insisted upon the Indian going to bed first, while he kept watch.

"Maybe the wolves will not come back," he said.

"They come!" was all that the red man said, as he wrapped himself in his blanket.

For a while Henry sat beside the glowing fire, and then an idea struck him. He dragged himself to the heap of twigs and threw more on the fire, after which he went to one of the packs and, cutting the thongs which bound it, rummaged amongst the contents; and produced a violin—a cheap instrument, which some of the traders had found quite a good barter with certain Indians. He had been thinking, while he sat at the fire, of the strange story that his father had once told him—of how, when wintering at a lonely outpost, he and his partner had been saved from wolves by the playing of a violin, which the tough old trapper loved to

fondle during the long winter nights out in the lonely spaces.

It was that little incident which had made violins a desirable thing amongst the red men, who saw in the instrument some mysterious virtue.

"I wonder—I wonder!" the boy grinned. "Well, it may be worth trying! If it's good playing wolves want, then it'll be no use," he said to himself, as he took the violin to the fire—for he had often envied his father his gift of getting sweet music from the taut strings, he himself not being able to play a bar.

He must have been on the watch for about a couple of hours when he heard the howling of the wolves, and knew they were returning for the feast of which they had been robbed earlier on. Henry aroused Eagle's Claw immediately, and they took up positions, the fire, on to which they piled more twigs, and threw a blanket, casting a ruddy glow for some distance round. They could not see beyond the circle of that light, but they could hear the howls drawing nearer, and presently the leader of the wolves entered it—and died suddenly as Henry's musket spoke.

It would be tedious to recount the story of what happened there then, it was more or less a replica of the first encounter in daylight; several wolves were killed and wounded, until at last barely half a dozen remained. These

were the most intrepid of the pack, however, and came at a rush for the fort. Suddenly, having fired his muskets and pistol, Henry grabbed up the violin which he had by his side, drew the bow across the strings, and produced a shriek hideous enough to scare the dead. The effect was electrical—the wolves pulled up in their stride, and leaped aside almost as though the muskets had cracked at them. Then they retreated to the edge of the circle of light and sat down with their tails between their legs, too scared even to howl.

It was a ridiculous situation, and the white youth laughed aloud, while Eagle's Claw, who knew what had prompted the youth, for once broke the barriers of imperturbability and laughed with him.

"You can shoot them while I play," Henry said, but at that moment ceased the hideous scraping. Instantly the wolves, as though a spell had been removed, loped forward, only to be sent back howling with fright as the boy drew the bow over the strings again. "Shoot!" breathed Henry, and the Indian's musket cracked, and he was about to fire the second one when, from the blackness beyond, came several shots, and the two besieged traders saw the remainder of the wolves go down, reddening the snow with their blood.

Henry looked at Eagle's Claw, not knowing what to think of it. Then suddenly into the



circle of light came trooping a band of Indians, who kicked the wolves as they passed them and made their way up to the walls of the fort.

"Who are you?" cried Henry, in Indian dialect.

"Chippeway," said the Indian who was evidently the chief, as he stepped forward.

"Inasmush!" cried Eagle's Claw, the word being the Indian name for Lynx; and the next moment he and the new-comer were hobnobbing together, apparently having utterly forgotten the white youth who lay on the packs looking at them.

## CHAPTER V

### NEW FRIENDS, AND A LONG JOURNEY

AFTER a while Eagle's Claw remembered his white brother and, turning, led the Lynx, as we may as well call the chief, up to him.

"My brother," he said simply, pointing to Henry. "Inasmush my friend; heem out for food, heem people starve," and then, turning to the Indian, he told him what had happened during the last few hours.

The Lynx was an interested listener, and when Eagle's Claw had done, said in a dialect which the white youth understood:

"The Lynx is your friend. He will go seek the white man who ran away!"

Henry thanked him, but in a few words told him that he did not wish to follow the traitor, but rather to continue the journey to Nelson River.

"I seek not vengeance," Henry said. "My hands must be clean of blood, even though that man is a traitor. The Great Spirit whom I love would not have me kill this man."

Henry spoke swiftly but earnestly, and his words had their effect.

"As the white man will," said the Lynx, "and I am his servant, and all my people are his servants."

Quick to seize the opportunity which presented itself, Henry pointed to the sleighs and said:

"Eagle's Claw and I go straight for Reindeer Lake with the coming of the day, and the white man asks his new friends to help them get his goods there! Before his red brothers came, the white man knew not how to go, since nearly all his dogs were gone, and those that remained not sufficient to drag the sleigh and its burden."

For answer, the Lynx turned to his companions who stood behind him, several harnessed to small sleighs, alas! all empty of food; for since they left their winter encampment they had found naught but sufficient to sustain themselves, and none to take back to the squaws and children huddled in the wigwams, reduced to eating their dogs.

"See," he cried, "the white man goes down to Reindeer Lake, and would that we helped him carry the things he has. *Wa go!*"

The red men merely grunted their approval—what the Lynx said was law to them. They drew up their sleighs alongside those of Mostyn, who forced them to share what little food was

left him, and then, while the braves curled up in their blankets, Eagle's Claw and the Lynx and Henry sat round the fire and talked.

The Lynx boasted, as was Indian wont, of his hunting and fighting prowess, and Eagle's Claw matched his tale against his, till Mostyn, despite his reputation amongst the men at the Fort, began to see himself as a babe in the wilds and life of the wilds.

"You tell," he cried, "of triumphs in battle and great deeds in the hunting fields, but I—I have no song of my own to sing; my song is of another. His deeds are great, his fame is wide, but his chief glory is that which is told in the lodges of the white men—how that, years ago, when the men of the Great Company pushed out first into the great North-West, he became blood-brother of the Chippewayans. Do not the white men tell to this day of how men who had gone before him sought and found the Chippewayans, but because they were harsh and offered not fair barter for skins, failed to win the red men for friends? Then he came over the snows in winter, even as I go to-day, spread his bounties and bid fair price for pelts. Does not the great white country ring to-day with the glory of the Peacemaker?"

At the sound of the word, the Lynx jumped to his feet, to the utter astonishment of the white youth.

"Who are you, white man, that you should

sing the Song of the Peacemaker?" the red man cried. "Who are you that you should sing his song because you have no song of your own?"

"He, O Lynx, is the son of the Peacemaker," said Eagle's Claw.

The effect upon the other Indian was tremendous.

"Listen, O white man!" he cried, and sleepers on the sleighs awoke at his voice, and sat up to listen. "Know you this: that, even as you are the son of the Peacemaker, so am I the son of Black Bear—he who was chief of his tribe when the Peacemaker came amongst them!"

It was Henry's turn to be excited now. He remembered how his father had told him of Black Bear—"The finest gentleman of nature I ever met, lad," the old trapper had been wont to say. He could not speak for emotion. The one fact that forced itself on his mind was that, because of his father's work, he was finding new friends—friends, he told himself, who would be faithful even unto death, and friends of whom he might yet be glad! From the sleighs came a chorus of grunts as the Chippewayans heard what their chief had said; and when at last white men and red men lay down to sleep, they were no longer as strangers, but as brothers indeed.

Thus it was that when the morning came the

great sleigh was repacked; some of the goods were piled on the Indians' sleighs; the small sleigh, which once had carried the food of the white man's party, was thrown up on another and fastened. Then with the four dogs helping to pull the largest, and Indians tugging at thong ropes hitched to the snow carriages, the little band struck off along a trail which was plain only to the red men; and the journey to the Lake was resumed.

Henry, lying on one of the sleighs, beside which walked the Lynx, found much to talk about, and had much to listen to.

"My people hunger," the Indian said. "The winter is hard—aye, worse than any for years past; we go to seek food for them."

"Why, then, do you go this 'six days' journey for me?" the boy asked.

"Are you not son of the Peacemaker?" the Indian said simply. "Besides, what matters it? On the banks of the big river are woods wherein we shall find the meat we want. In less than a moon we shall be back in our wigwams. It is good!"

But, although the Indian spoke so bravely, he knew what kind of journey was before the party, and he told the white boy. Everything proved to be as he had said it would be. The country was as barren as it well could be for the first four days, and the way was hard. The Indians pulled bravely at the sleighs, taking

without a murmur their allotted portions of the food which Mostyn had—portions all too small to sustain them, and serving rather to aggravate the pangs of hunger. Then, like a blessing in disguise, one of the dogs, unable to proceed any farther, died in its tracks, and there was one more meal. Then, on the fifth day, a keen-eyed Indian saw a moving blotch on the white landscape, slipped from the thong which held him to the sleigh, and at a speed that was incredible, considering his weakened state through lack of food, sped over the snow, his snow-shoes slithering over the smooth surface. After him went two others of the Chippewayans, and Mostyn watched them as they raced.

"'Tis a musk-ox," said the Lynx, whose eyes could see much farther than Henry's. "Foul food, but food!"

The white boy knew all about the musk-ox, and even the thought of eating it was repulsive! But when, some two hours later, the hunters returned, each burdened down with portions of the great brute, which they had caught and shot after a race of many miles, Henry was not a whit behind the Indians in taking his share of the musk-smelling, musk-tasting meat; even although, such was their extremity, it had to be eaten uncooked; because, when they had dug down beneath the surface, the moss was too wet to make a fire!

"We can reach the river now, and not go

hungry!" said Eagle's Claw when the meal was over. "We go not on to-day—rest now and speed to-morrow!"

So, digging down to the moss for a bed, and piling the sleighs again for a wind-break, the men lay down to take what rest they could, ready for the long pull to-morrow. Raw musk-ox made their breakfast, and the dogs, ravenously hungry, squabbled over the pieces of the evil meat flung to them. Of the three beasts, Blacknose was in the best condition, for which Henry was very grateful, the prospect of his canine friend being turned into food being too dreadful to contemplate.

"I think I could walk somewhat," Henry said, when all were ready to make a start. Each morning he had tried the ankle and found it growing stronger, and, eager to be doing something, to take his share in the toilsome journey, he would have risked walking, if not helping to draw a sleigh, but for the determination of the Lynx not to allow him to do so.

And so, on that day which was to see them at their journey's end, Henry had to submit to being hauled on a sleigh. The start was made almost before daybreak, and, with the exception of one brief halt for a hurried uncooked meal, the Indians held on till the short winter sun had gone to rest. By then they had entered a wood, which ran apparently for miles to north and south, and the Lynx called a halt.



"Enough!" he cried. "To-morrow! we shall see the river!"

There was no thought of supper that night—at least, if there was thought, there was no supper, for every bit of food had gone, with the exception of the white man's tea, and it was impossible to light a fire even to boil that!

So to sleep, and, for Mostyn's part, to dream of the days to come when he should linger by the bank of the river to await the coming of spring and the Indian trappers and their cargoes.

Pushing on in the morning through the wood, the Indians hauled the sleighs, and within a few hours had emerged from the trees, to find themselves standing on the shores of the river.

"Behold!" cried Eagle's Claw, and Henry, forgetting his ankle, clambered off the sleigh, and stood looking at the stretch of frozen surface before him. For a few moments he did not speak, and then, heart filled with gratitude, he turned to the ~~Ly~~.

"O red brother," he cried, extending his hand in salutation, "the son of the Peacemaker thanks you!"

"And the son of Black Bear rejoices that he has been able to do something for the son of his friend," said the Indian.

Throwing off the traces, the Chippewayans saw to the primings of their muskets, and very soon Mostyn found himself alone with the

sleighs and the three dogs; for the Indians had gone out seeking food.

Determined to do something at last, Henry began to look about him for moss and leaves to make a fire. At the foot of some of the trees he scraped away the top snow, and delved deep until he came to the moss. Here and there he found tiny pieces which were dry, and gathering as much of this as he needed, he went back to the sleighs, and struck sparks into a little heap of powder which, after several tries, flashed up. Then he fed the dry moss into it, and presently had the beginnings of a fire.

By the time he had gathered sufficient fuel to make a decent fire, the Indians began trooping back. Some—these were first—came with caribou slung over their shoulders. Those who had had no success came last, and when they did arrive, they found the meal all ready for them.

After the meal the pipe, and, with the pipe, a council. Ringed round the fire, the red men sat with their white brother, and after a while of silent puffing the Lynx spoke.

"The son of the Peacemaker will want hut," he said impassively, "and his brothers will help build it. The woods are filled with caribou which left the barren lands, and there will be plenty of food to take back. To-morrow, therefore, the red men go out to hunt, but to-day they work for the white brother."

"It is well," came from the twenty Indians who were with him, and Henry's eyes filled with tears as he realised with what whole-heartedness these men of the wilds were determined to serve him.

Very soon the woods rang with the blows of hatchets, as the Indians toiled at tree felling; and all that day, merely resting to eat, the red men slaved valiantly, with the result that by evening they had sufficient trunks for their purpose; and next day these were trimmed, and from them they built a log hut, large enough to hold all the goods that Mostyn had with him, and large enough to store the pelts he had come to fetch when he obtained them. The hut was triangular in shape, the base being on the edge of the river and the apex thrust out towards the forest. The trimmings of the trees, together with moss dug from beneath the snow, were fashioned into a roof, the finishing touches to that being put on some days later, when the hunters returned from the chase and used some of the skins of the animals killed.

Only when this was done did the red men bethink them of their own needs, and then they went into the woods, leaving Henry and Eagle's Claw at the little post to arrange things as they wanted them.

Mostyn, whose ankle was now sufficiently well to allow him to walk about, assisted the red man to unload the sleighs and carry the

heavy bales into the hut, where they were ranged round the walls, piled high, so making the place even more comfortable.

It was in a spirit of thankfulness that Henry laboured at getting his new house in order, and in less than a week everything was done. A rough sort of table had been made, and, along one side of the hut, a seat was placed; while, at some distance from the house, a stout stockade, made of split trunks, which he and the Indian had felled, was erected round the whole space of the clearing the Indians had made from the river bank, as a protection both against wild animals and unfriendly Indians; for Mostyn did not conceal from himself the fact that the long stay there might be filled with many perils. Fortunately, he had a fair supply of ammunition, though not so much that it would not have to be supplemented in some way.

"You will make bows and arrows, too?" he suggested to Eagle's Claw. "We may need them."

"Me make them," the Indian said.

To guard against being taken by surprise, Mostyn adopted a scheme which his father had found very effective. For some considerable distance round the fort, he strung well concealed cords amongst the undergrowth of the forest, and to these cords he fastened bells taken from his trade goods, so that it was impossible either

for man or beast to approach without setting the bells a-tinkling and giving notice of their presence. Those bells first rang at the end of a week, and well after the low-poised sun had finished its course. Henry, sleeping on the bed made of two hewn logs, covered with pine boughs and a blanket flung over, was awakened, and jumped to his feet in alarm, at the same time that Eagle's Claw slipped from his no more comfortable couch. For a moment the two listened, looking at each other in the red glow of the fire, and then Henry laughed out aloud.

"No foes, but friends," he cried, as from without came a hail in the voice of the Lynx.

The heavy door was unbarred, and, with flaring pine torches, Henry and his comrade went out to meet the returning hunters. A span of the stockade was drawn aside, and into the little fort the Indians trooped, dragging heavily laden sleighs.

"Welcome, brothers!" the white youth cried. "Welcome! The prowess of your arms has been great!" And he surveyed the enormous amount of meat which the braves had with them.

The Indians, for their part, were not a little astonished at the amount of work which Mostyn and his companion had put in during their absence, and the Lynx voiced his approbation.

"The son of the Peacemaker," he said, "is

wise, for the news will spread that he is here, and braves will come to see. Some will be envious of his fire-sticks, and some will covet the white man's blankets and tobacco; and coveting, will desire them without payment. The white man is wise to take heed!"

There was little more sleep for Mostyn that night. The hunters, or as many of them as could get in, entered the hut, and those who could not stayed in the stockade, where another fire was built, and a feast held, which lasted till dawn, when the Indians dropped off to sleep. It was about midday when they awoke, and the Lynx set them to work at loading up the sleighs with the meat, for he was leaving on the morrow for his encampment so many miles away.

"My two dogs are yours!" said Henry, pointing to the two animals—Blacknose, naturally, he would not part with, even to these good friends. "And you can have my sleighs—'twill make the loads easier to carry."

"I thank you, son of the Peacemaker," the Indian replied. "Fear not, I shall return with the time when the rivers run free and the lakes thaw, and bring with me both the dogs and sleighs—aye, and more sleighs and dogs, lest the son of the Peacemaker need them. For my people shall come in their scores, with skins that the white man needs!"

Henry's heart gave a bound—here was the first promise of success.

"When the great thaw came, moons since," the Chippewayan went on gravely, "another white man—he was not of the Great Company—bought the skins from my people. But henceforth the son of the Peacemaker shall have them. For——"

The Indian did not finish what he was going to say, for at that moment two men came halloaing across the snow along the river bank, speeding like the wind. One, as Henry could see, was Eagle's Claw, and the other one of the Lynx's men; the latter was the first to reach the little post, and he panted out to his chief:

"Behold, there come two pale-faces, with dogs and sleighs and red men!"

For a moment Mostyn was too dumb-founded to speak. Who could these white men be? He dared scarcely answer his own question, for there could be but one answer, since the trains which he had left just outside the Fort at Prince of Wales, on the Churchill, were to go elsewhere than to this point of the river; these men, coming from the southwards, must be traders of the North-West Company!

He looked at the Lynx, who had called together his men—called them from their labours of loading the sleighs—but before he could speak Eagle's Claw had come abreast of the door of the fort, and called out to him:

" 'Tis the white fox who comes, brother! "

And Henry knew that he meant that one of those new-comers was Tom Blaine, the man who had so basely deserted him, after robbing him of most of the food and nearly all the trade goods of the expedition!

Very rapidly the boy explained to the Lynx, who immediately shouted out something to his men which sent them flying for their arms.

" The son of Black Bear will take vengeance! " he cried to Henry.

It was a moment of tense dramatic possibilities. Henry Mostyn felt all the old bitterness against Blaine well up within him—bitterness intensified a thousandfold because of the dastardly trick that had been played—the trick that might have meant the death of him and his red comrade; moreover, there was the fact that Blaine had frankly said that he was going over to the North-West Company, taking with him the goods belonging to the Hudson Bay Company. By all the laws of the wild life, Henry knew that he would be justified in allowing these new-found friends to take vengeance for the crime that both white and red men scorned as the lowest, basest crime. And for a brief moment he was tempted to place himself at their head and sally forth to give fight to Blaine.

Then, like a flash, came the words of his father:



"I'm willing to bury the hatchet, and maybe you'll help to dig the grave for it!"

While he had been hesitating, the Lynx and his men had collected their weapons—muskets obtained in trading, bows and arrows and tomahawks—while Eagle's Claw had arrayed himself with a formidable collection of arms, and his face was set grimly.

"Hold, O brother!" cried Henry suddenly, and the red chief turned in astonishment. "Hold! Listen to the son of the Peacemaker. He seeks not the death of the man who deserted him in his dire need. The Man who would have Peace knows how the son of Black Bear feels for him, how that he would even die for him, and he is glad! But, even as the Peacemaker would have done, so will his son do—he will go seek the white fox, and try to make peace! It is the will of the Man who would have Peace, and it is that which the God of the Pale-faces would have him do."

Henry had realised that the time had come for him to use that firmness which would be admired by the Indians, and as he spoke he threw into his speech all the determination of which he was capable. Then he told these raw Indians something of the Gospel of Peace, and when he had finished the Lynx was silent for a while. Then, very gravely, he said:

"The Man who would have Peace—aye, the Little Peacemaker—has spoken! In his

wisdom he knows best. He knows what the Great Spirit of the Pale-faces asks of him, though it is indeed strange that a man may not take vengeance. The son of Black Bear is afraid for his friend! Go seek that white fox, and we will wait here!"

With many grunts of disapproval the red men fell away, but they did not lay down their arms, Henry noticed, and neither did the chief; while Eagle's Claw, for the first time that Henry remembered, looked as though he entirely disagreed with his white comrade.

Henry ran into the hut, and from a pack drew out a vivid flag, similar to that draped about one side of the wall; then, darting to a pile of stout sticks, he fastened the flag to one of them, called to Eagle's Claw, clambered on the Indian's shoulders, and nailed his rough flag-post to the trunks above the doorway; and there, floating in the breeze, was the proud symbol of the Hudson Bay Company.

"It is well," said the chief, when he saw what the boy had done; for he knew that this signalled the taking possession of that neighbourhood for the Great Company.

And then, with his musket in his hand, and Blacknose trotting along by his side, Henry Mostyn left the stockade and glided down the river to meet Thomas Blaine.

"No," he had said, when first the Lynx, and then Eagle's Claw, had offered to accompany

him. "No, the Little Peacemaker"—he was glad to have that name thrust upon him—"the Little Peacemaker goes alone!"

And alone he went, and after a while, swinging round a bend, came face to face with Blaine.

The appearance of Henry Mostyn, standing directly in his path, seemed to shake Blaine to the very core, and he staggered back as though shot. Was this the ghost of the man he had deserted, he asked himself! It seemed incredible that it could really be Henry Mostyn, whom over a fortnight ago he had left lying helpless in the snows, and with not enough dogs to get him anywhere near this place. When he had left Mostyn, Blaine had, of course, arranged with Hawk Eye to desert in the night, carry off all he possibly could, and bring the dogs.

Blaine's desertion of Mostyn had been part of a carefully laid scheme. Hawk Eye was an old guide of the Blaines, and coming into Prince of Wales Fort, after having been sent out specially by young Blaine, had told him that Farnhold, a North-West Company man, was making for the river to the south of the Reindeer Lake. Blaine had intended deserting to Farnhold, no matter with whom he went out, and he had chosen the time to do so when the expedition was not a great distance from the place where Farnhold was to be encamped. He had found

him all right, thanks to the guidance of Hawk Eye and Red Cloud, and bringing as he did a large supply of trade goods, he was welcomed by Farnhold.

The latter, when he heard that young Mostyn's destination had been the junction of the big river with that which flowed into Reindeer Lake, and that there was just a possibility—although a very remote one—that the boy might be able to make it, had not been averse from making tracks towards the junction, especially as he had only just reached his own destination and had not yet run up a new post on the ruins of the one he had built the year before, but which had been destroyed by Indians in the meantime.

"Even if Mostyn did get there," Blaine had said, "it wouldn't be until long after us, and then we should have possession!"

So the two white men, together with Blaine's two Indians and a couple of Farnhold's, had set out, and here was the result!

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LITTLE PEACEMAKER

HENRY MOSTYN was alive!

With a great effort, Blaine recovered his self-control, and seemed about to speak, even began to move towards Mostyn, but drew back as, snarling, Blacknose flashed from Henry's side.

"Down, Blacknose!" cried Henry, and the dog came to heel again. "Tom Blaine," Mostyn faced the traitor now, "you're a treacherous cur, and a thief!"

"Take that back!" cried Blaine. "No Mostyn shall call me that!" and he raised his musket threateningly.

"Drop that," ordered Henry sternly. "I call you that which is true! You did that which not even an Indian does to his enemy—you left me wellnigh foodless, and when I was sick and knew not where I was. That was your treachery! You stole the Company's goods and my dogs—there was your theft. You thought I should perish, I do not doubt, and your crime be hidden in the depths of some

forest, or only my bones be left to tell the story; while you, later, would have been able to fashion some lying tale. No, listen!" he said sternly, as Blaine seemed about to interrupt. "I hold your note. That was your greatest mistake, to write that. Even were my bones bleached by wind and sun, that might have been found! But I have come through—no matter how—and see!" He strode back along the river, beckoning Blaine to him.

The traitor could do no other than follow, and, going round the bend, saw with amazement the little fort in the distance, with the flag of the Hudson Bay Company waving in the breeze, a touch of colour against the dark green of the forest.

"See," cried Henry, "I am before you!"

Rage, chagrin—a variety of emotions—showed themselves in Blaine's face, but he could not speak. He knew that he was condemned, and a great fear took hold of him. Some day the white men of the Hudson Bay Company would know of his crime!

"And now," went on Mostyn, as Blaine did not speak, "I demand, in the name of the Company, those things which you stole! Goods, and dogs, and sleighs!"

Then Blaine spoke, vehemently, angrily.

"You fool," he cried, "I'm holding what I've got! And know this, young Mostyn pup, know this, that in the days to come there will

be fierce rivalry, fiercer than ever before, between the North-West Company men and the men of the Hudson Bay Company. And I'm a North-West man now!"

"What's all this talking?"

It was Farnhold, a man of about forty-five, who had spoken. He had been standing at a distance when Mostyn had first stepped out in front of Blaine, and had now come up to see what was the matter.

Henry told him; and when he heard the story, Farnhold grinned.

"Youngster," he said, "you'll learn that this game's fought with hard fists. You lost 'way back, as I see it, and if Blaine hands over those goods he's a fool, an'—an' I've done with him!"

"But they belong to the Hudson Bay Company!" cried Henry, "and——"

"You're young, very young," Farnhold shook his head. "We've got 'em, ain't we? Well, they're ours. So you can get off your perch quickly, young man."

"And you can pull down that pretty rag from over that hut," said Blaine viciously, "and clear out! We're here, and here we mean to stay!"

Henry looked at the two men scornfully.

"I came out here, Tom Blaine," he said, "not to cringe before you, but to tell you the truth! And I've told you it. But I came also to make you this offer: give back the goods

and the dogs, and, whether you choose to go to the North-West Company or to come back with me, no one shall ever know of what you did 'way up there,' " and he pointed to beyond the great forest. "For the last time, I give you the chance. Will you take it?"

"He'll not do anything of the kind," put in Farnhold. "So you'll just get back to that shanty and haul down that rag, and then clear."

"That's so," said Blaine; but palpably Henry's, implied suggestion—that, if he did not accept his offer, the world should later know of his perfidy—had unnerved him again. But, in face of Farnhold's dictum, Blaine could not draw back, even had he wanted to.

"I'm going back to that shanty," Mostyn said quietly, "but the 'rag' will never come down, and I shall not leave until I've finished that which I came out to do. Come on, Black-nose!" And with the dog trotting at his heels, Henry turned and glided back over the river to the fort.

His young face was set when he entered, and the Indians, who, for some reason, were remaining concealed behind the stockade, knew that he had failed, even before he told them the result of his mission.

"Little Peacemaker," said the chief, "now let my braves go settle the white traitor!"

"No," said Henry, who only at that moment realised that he had said nothing to Blaine of



the Chippewayans. When he told the Lynx this, the Indian said:

"It is well; we wait here till to-morrow to see what the white men do, and we keep hidden!"

Henry knew what he meant, and realised that what the chief had in his mind was quite possible. Blaine and the stranger, believing that Mostyn and Eagle's Claw were alone, might decide to rush the fort during the night; and Henry's mouth set grimly as he thought of what would happen if they did!

During the rest of the short afternoon, the Lynx kept his men concealed behind the stockade, while Eagle's Claw ostentatiously stood on guard.

When evening fell, Eagle's Claw said he would take a rest. Instead of doing so, all unknown to Henry, the red man slipped out of the stockade, and knowing the intricacies of the cords and bells, managed to work his way through without giving an alarm. Then, silently as a lynx, he slipped between the trees, working round so that he should come beyond the bend in the river where Henry had said he left Blaine.

When he neared the edge of the wood, Eagle's Claw saw the glow of a fire and knew that he was near the camp of the white men. Walking as lightly as a wild cat, he flitted from tree to tree, until he came within

hearing distance of the camp, and then stood, immutable as a figure carved in stone, listening. For half an hour he remained there, the low drone of voices coming to him.

"See here, Blaine," Farnhold was saying, "you're in a tight hole. That young Mostyn's in the right, of course, and you were a fool to show your hand in the way you did!"

"I know, Farnhold," Blaine answered. "I ought never to have written that note, though, thank goodness, I didn't sign it. I wish you hadn't insisted on keeping the goods. I could have got him then to keep his mouth shut. Mostyn would not have broken his word."

"Don't be a squeamish fool!" rapped Farnhold. "We'll want those goods—they'll fill the place of the bunch I lost when my biggest sleigh went crashing into the river, 'way back before I met you. An' the grub'll come in handy, too! No, son, there's a better way than that," he said slyly, and then hesitated.

"What is it?" Blaine asked.

"You know what'll happen when the Hudson Bay Company men hear? They'll vow to get you, and sure they'll run you to earth, if it takes years to do so; for old Mostyn's in high favour with them. Your life won't be worth living, lad!"

Blaine did not answer—he knew that every word was true, and he feared the future, but

knew no way out. It was left to Farnhold to suggest that way.

"There's only one thing to do," the elder man went on grimly. "Mostyn must be got rid of."

"But how?" cried Blaine, half fearing what Farnhold was going to say.

"He's only got that one Indian with him?" Farnhold asked. "Well, I reckon we're more than a match for them, even if they are tucked up in that stockade. I suggest we jump 'em to-night, and if—if Mostyn gets a plugged skin, why, that's part of the game, eh?"

To the credit of Blaine be it said that he recoiled from the thought of this. To leave Mostyn out on the snowy wastes alive, even although the odds were that he would die of starvation, seemed very different from falling upon him in the night and killing him; and, for a while, he fought against Farnhold's suggestion. But always the other played his trump card—he dangled before Blaine the dread of what would be when the Hudson Bay Company men discovered what he had done, and at last Blaine gave in.

Eagle's Claw stayed only long enough after that to learn the plans for the attack, and then, as stealthily as he had come, he stole away, hurrying to the stockade. He slipped through the signal bells quietly, and entered the hut to warn Mostyn of the peril awaiting him.



But Henry was not there. The Indian asked the Lynx where he was.

"He went out a little while ago," was the reply. "He said he was going to see where the white men had pitched their camp, and refused to allow anyone to go with him. The Little Peacemaker is brave, surely!"

Eagle's Claw started back as though shot when the chief told him of Henry's departure, and then, recovering, he recited the tale of what he had heard.

Instantly the Lynx was alert; he called his men to arms, crying:

"We go to fetch back the Little Peacemaker, and to take vengeance on the white men who plot his destruction."

And filing out of the stockade, the red men passed into the woods, and began the march down to the Blaine encampment, Eagle's Claw leading the way.

But what of Henry Mostyn? Sitting in the hut, he had been thinking of all that had happened, and blaming himself for the incident of the afternoon.

"I used the wrong methods with Blaine," he said gloomily. "I ought not to have called him a thief and a traitor. The Blaines never would stand that!"

Out of the turmoil of his thoughts came the determination to make one more effort to win over the man who had deserted him, and, telling

the chief what he was going to do, Henry left the stockade, and travelled swiftly over the river, which accounts for the fact that Eagle's Claw had not met him.

Turning the bend, Henry saw the camp fire of the North-West men, and headed for it. Farnhold, looking up, caught sight of him, and turning swiftly to Blaine said:

"Here comes the Mostyn pup, and probably his Indian is behind him in the woods. They hope to take us by surprise."

Then, without giving Blaine a chance to reply, he said, "But we've got him," and muttered something to one of his Indians, who glided away.

When within twenty yards of the camp, Mostyn, about to call out to the traders, felt an arm circle his neck, felt the hot breath of a man upon his cheek, and then, without ever a sound, went down on to the ice, and the next he knew was that he was standing bound tightly to a tree, with Tom Blaine and Farnhold leering at him.

## CHAPTER VII

### "WHITE MAN'S FOLLY!"

For all that twenty-two men were passing through the forest, not a sound was to be heard, and the Indians under the Lynx came within a few yards of the spot where Blaine's camp fire was burning. At a sign from the chief the red men scattered, each taking up a position behind a tree, and waiting for the moment to attack.

And the sight that met their eyes made them writhe with suppressed fury. Grimly the chief waited in silence while he looked at the tableau before him.

"We'll let you go free and unharmed, Mostyn," Blaine was saying, as he stood in front of the young trader who was tied to the tree, to which, after the Indian sent out by Farnhold had wellnigh choked him into unconsciousness, they had bound him. "We'll let you go if you give your word of honour to say nothing about the—the——"

"Give the right name for it," said Mostyn quietly. "Call it treachery!"

"Your word of honour to keep a still tongue about our little dispute," went on Blaine, ignoring the interruption, though his face was livid with rage. "If not——" and he fingered his musket significantly.

"If not, we're going to shoot you!" said Farnhold more directly. "Don't beat about the bush, Blaine. Here's the position, Mostyn: we've got you, and that's as good as having that little shanty you've run up, with all the goods Blaine left you. We'll never give them back to you; but we'll give you your life if you promise Blaine your silence. Is it a deal?"

"I make no deal with rogues!" cried Henry. "I came out, 'tis true, to strike a bargain—twice I came out; but you've played this dirty game, and think to make me buy my life by betraying my Company. You don't know the Mostyns," he said, turning to Farnhold; "but Blaine here does!"

Farnhold picked up his musket, threw it to his shoulder, and said:

"One more chance, Mostyn! Is it a deal?"

"No!" said Henry through clenched teeth, and waited for the hammer of the musket to fall. He had been watching it, fascinated, while Farnhold spoke, and it seemed queer to think that when that fell his life would be over.

The hammer did not fall. Instead, the musket went clattering to the ground, and

Farnhold spun round, shot through the brain by the Lynx. And a moment after, with ringing war-cries, the red men burst from their cover, and, before the Indians of the North-West man could spring to arms, had finished them off. Eagle's Claw, disdaining the use of his musket, had drawn his keen-knife and flung himself at Blaine, and the two men went down, crashing on to the top of the fire and scattering it in all directions. There was a cry from Blaine, not because the Indian's knife had found him, but because his hand had been burnt; and then the men fought like demons.

Henry, no less startled than his foes, was spellbound for a few seconds, and then realised that he was not to die. He looked about him wonderingly, saw the dead Indians and the dead Farnhold lying on the ground, felt someone cut the cords that bound him, and then knew that he was free. Farnhold's dogs were howling with fright, and some of the red men went to quieten them, while the others, including the chief, stood by, impassively watching the grim duel between white man and red.

By this time Blaine, who was no coward and no weakling, had managed to wrench himself free of Eagle's Claw, and the two men were circling round and round, each waiting for the opportunity to leap in and bring the battle to a close. With a quick movement, Eagle's Claw pulled out his tomahawk, at the same



moment that he hurled his knife. Blaine saw the knife come and stepped sharply aside, but he had not seen the flashing tomahawk swing into the Indian's right hand.

Mostyn, however, had seen it, and it seemed to arouse him to the fact that Blaine was doomed, and, even as the red man sprang, Henry bounded forward and, with a loud cry, flung himself on Blaine, sending him hurtling to the ground a couple of yards away, while Eagle's Claw went tumbling forward. Henry was upon Blaine before he could rise, and had him by the throat with one hand, while with the other he wrenched the knife from him.

Then the young trader stood up, and, with Blaine still lying on the ground before him, he called out:

"I, the Little Peacemaker, claim this white man's life!"

Uprose a babble at that, and the Lynx sprang towards Mostyn.

"Back, brother," cried Henry sternly. "By the law of the red man, I claim his life as mine!"

The chief fell back sullenly, while Eagle's Claw, gripping his tomahawk, glared at Blaine, who was looking amazedly at his enemy.

"Get up," Henry snapped at him, and the other rose to his feet, white-faced and still wondering what plan of vengeance was forming in his foe's mind.

Unarmed as he was, Blaine knew that he was utterly at the mercy of Mostyn, and he shuddered as he thought of the position when, a few brief minutes previously, he had been watching, without raising a hand, his now dead partner take aim at this youth who had called off the dogs of war.

"Listen," cried Henry to all and sundry. "Listen to me, the son of the Peacemaker. This man has wronged me, as all know. I offered him safety, but he refused my terms. You, my brothers, have saved me from his anger, and the heart of the Little Peacemaker is filled with gladness. This man, who has played the crafty fox's part, shall go free! I say it—I, son of the Peacemaker. Prepare him a sleigh with food and dogs and weapons, and he shall go forth whither he will, and no one shall say him nay. But, know this," Henry turned to the now shrinking Blaine. "Know this: I make no promise to you to keep silence! That is my vengeance—and that alone. Go!"

Blaine staggered back, his face white as death, and his hands clenched.

"Mostyn," he began, but the boy stopped him with a gesture.

"Go, Blaine," he said. "I know what you would say: you would ask me to keep counsel regarding your treachery. But I say neither that I will nor that I will not tell. Go to your

North-West Company—go, and may they profit by you, if they need such men as you!"

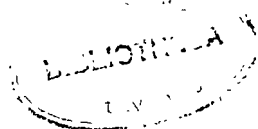
Blaine slunk away at that, knowing that Mostyn had no more to say and would not budge. Quickly the red men got ready a sleigh for him, harnessed a train of dogs to it, while Henry saw that sufficient food and ammunition were stored to last his enemy for several weeks; and then, without a word, Blaine clambered on the sleigh, cracked his whip, and drove off into the night.

He did not ask for Farnhold's trade goods, as he wanted to be clear of the whole matter. It might be, he told himself, that Mostyn would keep silent, and so, only knowing that he was for ever cut off from the old Company, he struck the trail which earlier that day he and Farnhold had come along.

So for a while did Thomas Blaine pass out of the life of Henry Mostyn.

"But why, O brother——" the Lynx began asking Mostyn, who, however, interrupted him.

"I know what you would say," Henry said. "Why do I let the fox go? Have I not told you that I seek not his death? Listen. In the pages of the Pale-faces' book it is written that a man should forgive his enemies." And pulling a much-thumbed Bible from his pocket, Mostyn read to the Indians until their eyes began to light up, and when he had finished the Lynx said:



"Some day, brother, you shall tell us more of those words!"

"'Tis the white man's folly."

The Lynx was speaking, and it was in the little fort on the bank of the river. Dogs and sleighs and all stores found at Farnhold's camp had been taken to the stockade, and Mostyn had just said to the chief:

"The goods of the pale-face killed in battle belong to my brothers. His dogs also, since now I have all those that were mine," and, despite the fact that the Indians did not want to take them, Henry refused to keep them himself.

"Since the white brother will have it so, then will we take them," the chief said at last, unable as yet to appreciate what Mostyn had said around the fire. "'Tis the white man's folly to have his hands at his enemy's throat and then to draw back. Some day Little Peacemaker will know that!"

But for all his seeming disapproval, the Indian's admiration of the young trader increased a thousandfold as the result of the magnanimity shown by him.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A LONG WAIT AND A GREAT TRIUMPH

THE next day the Lynx and his braves bade farewell to their white friend.

"We go now, Little Peacemaker," the chief said, "but we come back with the thaw!"

"It is good," said Henry. "The Little Peacemaker thanks his friends for all they have done for him."

And that was all that passed between them ere the sleigh, loaded with food and the goods taken from Farnhold's camp, filed out of the stockade and went jingling—some man-hauled, others drawn by dogs—across the white vastness.

Henry, when they had disappeared in the distance, felt a strange loneliness, a loneliness that was to grow upon him during the months he was to stay there with Eagle's Claw for sole company. It was the first time that the white boy had been alone on a fur post; but he knew, from the experience of others, that the life was lonely and full of unknown perils. Yet he was not afraid.

For over a fortnight there was plenty to do; the larder had to be stocked, and the two comrades went into the woods to hunt and to kill, so that they had a fair supply of meat to last them. They did not both go together, one always remaining to keep watch over the stores in the hut and to care for the dogs. It was when he returned one day, with a sleigh laden with game, that Henry had his first insight into what might always be happening. When within a few hundred yards of the stockade, he heard the crack of a musket, and thinking only that it was Eagle's Claw shooting at some animal which had ventured near, he did not hurry forward. But, when he came still nearer, he heard other shots, and realised that something was afoot. Leaving the sleigh, he hurried on, knowing that Blacknose would bring the sleigh in all right; then, going carefully, he saw a sight that wellnigh froze him to where he stood.

A score of Indians, befeathered and in war-paint, were rushing towards the stockade from different directions. As he looked, one man went down to the ground, shot by Eagle's Claw, who was firing from the shelter of the fort, through an opening in one of the walls; then another, and then Henry himself fired: and the Indians, evidently fearing that several more foes might be falling upon them from the woods, scattered like chaff before the wind.

Henry, knowing that it was dangerous to try to reach the stockade, stayed where he was, well sheltered by trees. He knew that the Indians had not seen where his shot had come from, because they were all intent upon reaching the fort at the time; but he was aware that they would not fail to seek him.

For a long, long while he remained where he was, still as the trees themselves, and was thinking that he might perhaps venture to move from tree to tree until he reached the water's edge, when, to his alarm, the sleigh appeared in sight, dashing towards the stockade!

Henry expected that its appearance would be the signal for the Indians to fire, but nothing happened, and he realised that the red men were lying low, knowing that if they fired their enemies would fire at the places where the flash of the exploding powder showed. Straight as a dart the sleigh, drawn by Blacknose, made for the part of the stockade which was used as a gate, and Henry saw it open—it was worked by a draw-string.

And then, impetuously, the white youth sprang from his hiding-place, forgetting that probably the Indians would expect some such thing to happen. Like a hare he sped through the trees, and, working his way towards the opening, just as the end of the sleigh disappeared, he flung himself forward and passed through, followed by half a dozen shots: for the Indians

had seen him, but he was moving so rapidly from tree to tree that they could not fire with any hope of hitting him then, and had aimed at the space between the trees and the gate. A shot carried away his cap, another grazed his heel, several went singing past his ears, but he got through unscathed. The door of the hut opened inwards, he flung himself in, the door closed behind him, and he was safe.

He lay panting awhile, and Eagle's Claw stood grimly silent at his hole in the wall, watching.

"How long have they been here?" Henry asked, when he had recovered breath.

"They come just before you fire!" was the red man's reply. "Me hear bells, look out, and see them stalking as a hunter stalks the deer. Me wait till one, their chief, throw torch, and then me fire; he fall. Then they come on, and you know rest."

By this time Henry was standing by the side of the Indian, looking out, but seeing no sign of the red men.

"It's a pity I wasn't here," he muttered to himself. "I'm sorry we had to fire at them, but there was nothing else for Eagle's Claw to do."

For a while he stood in deep thought, and then, going to a bale, undid it and scattered the things about. Kettles, knives, little trinkets, all manner of things he got together, and then



went to the door. Eagle's Claw watched him till then in silence.

"'Tis death," he said grimly, for he realised what the white youth was intending.

But Henry took no notice. Calmly he opened the door. He knew there was little danger of being shot at from the river. He stood outside the door, and with all the strength of his young right arm hurled a heavy kettle high over the roof of the hut and heard it fall with a clatter. Again and again he did this: sometimes a kettle, at others a knife or a mirror, and then went back to the hole by which the Indian was standing, imperturbably looking out.

Henry looked out now and saw here and there beyond the stockade the glistening tin of a kettle or a mirror which caught the sun. He waited silently, expectantly; if his plan did not work, then it was war, he knew.

But his plan did work, for presently he saw a befeathered head peep from behind the sheltering trees, and, as nothing happened—no crack of musket, no singing shot flew past his ears—the red man seemed to take heart of courage, seemed to realise that the men in the hut were for peace. And with eyes sweeping all around, but always coming back to those desirable things on the ground, the man ran forward, grabbed up a kettle, held it high, and then darted back to the woods. One after another the Indians did this, and presently

Henry slipped out of the door, and shouting, "Peace—Peace!" walked boldly up to the stockade unarmed, but carrying further trifling gifts.

And that was how the young trader faced his first encounter with the wild men. They came out of their hiding-places, wondering at the skilful ingenuity that set bells a-tinkling as they came up to the stockade; just a little fearful of the white man, and, no doubt, wondering how many there might be inside the hut.

They took the presents offered and tried to get over the stockade, but firmly, though gently, the white youth refused to allow them to do so.

"The white man's lodge is his own!" he said. "And see!" He held up his hand and Eagle's Claw, inside the hut, fired a train of gunpowder. There was a flash which ran well-nigh all round the hut. "See, the white man's lodge is guarded."

That little trick of a powder train was Henry's own idea, and he was secretly elated at the success of it, for the Indians drew back in alarm; this white man was a medicine man, seeing that by raising his hand he could make the fire flash so far away.

For over an hour the Indians gathered about the stockade, and when they went away they were loaded with presents, and had vowed that no more would they attack the white men.

"Go tell your people," Henry had said,

"that the white man comes to trade, not to steal and kill. When the great thaw comes he would have skins, and he has more of those things," pointing to the gifts he had made them.

During the *pourparlers* the white youth succeeded in satisfying the red men for the damage inflicted on them; fortunately, none of the Indians had been killed, otherwise the task might have been rendered more difficult. As it was, by binding up the wounds of the chief and the three other men who had been shot, and making them lavish presents, Henry turned their hostility into something resembling friendliness, while the unwounded men were distinctly favourable.

The natives grunted approval, and, when they went away to their people again, it was to tell a tale of the munificence of the white man down by the big water, so that wherever they went the news spread.

We may pass rapidly over the next three months of Mostyn's exile, though doing so means missing out many a grim tussle and fight for life. One incident, however, must be mentioned as typical of the dangers run from wild beasts. Never again were they attacked by Indians; the only intruders on their solitude were found to be some prowling breasts, lured by the smell of the meat which they had stored. For weeks they had had to keep to the stockade

because of the severity of the weather, but fortunately they had sufficient food to last them till the thaw came, and it was after this meat, the scent of which was carried by the wind, that wild, hungry animals came.

Sleeping soundly after a hard day's work at sorting out the trade goods, Henry and his Indian comrade were aroused by the sound of the bells, and before they could snatch up their weapons there came a scratching and clawing at the roof.

"Wild cat!" said the red man briefly, and up on the matted roof Henry heard the scratching beast, sneezing hard as the smoke from the fire curled up through the funnel-shaped apex. Both men fired towards the spot where they judged the beast was, but still the scratching went on, and a gap began to appear in the roof. Shots failed to hit home because they ricocheted off the thicker branches, and so, working feverishly, Henry piled bales on top of one another until he had made a heap which would enable him to reach the roof by standing on it. He mounted quickly, hatchet in hand, and the steel gleamed in the fitful light from the fire. He was standing just to the side of the enlarging hole, and the claws of the wild cat showed through. Quietly Henry waited, and presently the muzzle of the beast appeared. With a crashing blow the boy caught the wild brute; there was a screech of pain, a scuffling,

the thud of something hitting the ground, and then all was still for a while.

Presently, the men in the hut could hear the animal racing about outside, whining with the pain; but at last there was silence again, and they knew that the brute had gone flying over the stockade to the woods.

A dish of tea, quickly made, and then off to sleep again till morning.

So, the monotony of the days broken by such exciting incidents, the long winter passed, the spring came, the woods began to live again, the thick ice cracked; and at last, far away up the river, black moving dots appeared.

"They come," said Eagle's Claw, and Henry hoisted the Company's flag over the hut. Everything was ready, even to the last of the winter's meat which the two lonely comrades had prepared for the cooking-pot to give the new-comers a feast. There was plenty more in the woods.

Larger and larger the moving dots appeared until they resolved themselves into canoes, canoes of all sizes and by the score, each with its one or two Indians as crew, and each laden to the gunwales with skins.

Henry and Eagle's Claw stood at the door of the post, and when the canoes were near enough, hailed them. The foremost canoe swerved towards them and ran to the bank, followed by the others, and very soon a great

band of Indians, men, women, and children, were gathered outside the stockade.

"Eat!" said Henry briefly, pointing to the pots over the several fires which he had lighted outside, and, with grunts of thanks, the Indians grouped around the pots and regaled themselves until nothing was left.

Then Henry strolled, unarmed, over to them and greeted them.

"The white man welcomes you!" he said, "and he has that with which to buy your skins," and he pointed to the flag of his Company—the flag which these Indians knew well.

"The white man speaks fair words," said an old chief, "but he belongs not to those who, the last thaw and the one before that, came hither to buy. Your people stayed in their lodges and thought we would make the long journey, but other pale-faces came out to us."

Henry launched forth into a long speech, filled with rough eloquence which would be appreciated by the red men: a speech telling of the greatness of his Company, the first traders in that region; and he told of how the men of the North-West Company were trespassers upon the domains which the Hudson Bay Company had nursed through many a year.

"Good prices we pay," he told them in their dialect, "good prices and fair bargain. I, the son of the Peacemaker"—he ventured this shot

in the dark in the hope of prevailing upon them, but it seemed to have no effect—"I come in the name of the Great Company. No more shall you have to go the long journey; we come to meet you."

And then he sat down, leaving the Indians to haggle amongst themselves. Clearly some were for trading with him, others not, till up spoke an old chief.

"See!" he cried, "there are the pale-face's blankets," and he pointed to the gaudy fabric which Henry had taken the precaution to have piled at his door. "And there are his knives, his ornaments that our squaws desire. Where are the men we came to meet? Are they not half a moon's journey down the river? Has not this pale-face come out farther to meet us!"

In a flash Henry realised that by pitching his post so far along the river he had outwitted the North-West men, who had that year sent only Farnhold to an advance post, and, seeing that Farnhold was no more, he stood a chance, if the old chief's plea was effective.

He waited anxiously for the result, and at last it became evident, that it needed only the voice of someone in authority to make the waverers give way, for, after a further confab, the Indians turned back towards the post and signified their willingness to trade.

Then began a busy time for Henry and Eagle's Claw. The red man proved an able

assistant, and commodities changed hands very quickly, so that, despite a certain amount of haggling, by the end of the day Henry had purchased the whole consignment of furs—beaver, foxes', raccoons', and what not; and the Indians were satisfied, everyone of them.

A great feast was spread that night by the red men, and the young trader mingled with them, supplied them with tobacco, smoked with them and talked with them, ingratiating himself and making many a friendship, with the result that when, next day, the Indians took to their canoes it was with the promise that they would meet the pale-face at the next thaw at a place appointed.

For over a month Mostyn intercepted Indians coming down the river, and with but one or two exceptions succeeded in winning them to traffic. At the end of that month he had nearly exhausted all his supplies, and the stockade was crammed with skins.

And still the Lynx and his people had not come.

"The son of Black Bear will come!" Eagle's Claw assured Henry. "I go to meet him," nodding towards one of the canoes which had been bought from various Indians.

"As you will, Eagle's Claw," Henry said.

The Indian fell to provisioning the canoe, and presently, with a salutation, he sped up the river which led into Reindeer Lake.



For two days Mostyn was alone at the little post; but he found much to do, so that time did not hang heavily; and at the end of the two days he saw a number of canoes heading down the river, and knew that at last the Lynx had come.

And he had come with a wealth of furs which exceeded that of any other company of Indians with whom Henry had traded, such a wealth, indeed, that the youth knew not how to get them to the fort on the Churchill.

"Little Peacemaker, I and my braves will go thither with you as we promised," said the chief, as they sat together at a feast on the night of the arrival of the Chippewayans. "I long to see the father of my friend and the friend of my father!"

So next day, all being ready, the party left the wooden fort which had been the home of Mostyn for so long, and it was with tear-filled eyes that he looked back at it, wondering whether he would ever see it again. For days the canoes passed along the Churchill River, here and there, because of the rapids, the Indians having to portage the canoes, dragging them over rough banks and putting them back into the river when the falls were passed. Then along the river again, and so on and on, day after day, weary with the hard toil of it all, still pressing on for mile after mile, until the grey

walls of Prince of Wales Fort appeared in sight one balmy July morning.

By arrangement, the musket of every man was fired in salute, and presently the walls of the fort were filled with figures, the big guns boomed out their greeting, the great gates swung wide open as the canoes ran to bank, and into the fort trooped the Indians, led by the youth who had brought success to a perilous adventure.

He received a great ovation, but, first of all, he went to the house of his father, whom he found recovered somewhat from the illness which had laid him low; and with Henry went the Lynx.

"Behold, father, the son of Black Bear!" the boy said proudly. "And behold, the Peacemaker!" he said to the Indian.

It was an affecting meeting, and Henry left them to it while he hurried to the Governor's House to report. We may pass rapidly over what happened there. Henry told how that one night Blaine had gone away, farther south, he said (but said nothing at all about the desertion), and had never returned; and how that he had made friends with wellnigh all the Indians who had come down from the Reindeer, and brought back a wealth of furs.

Then he propounded a scheme over which he had been thinking. It was nothing less than that he should be sent out, with another

trader or so, to the far-off North-West, beyond where any white man had yet gone, and set up a permanent post.

The Governor, who was enthusiastic over the whole matter, seeing that the parties which had so far returned had brought in rich consignments of furs, promised to think it over, and the next day, when Mostyn's cargoes had been inspected, he called the youngster to him and said:

"Mostyn, it shall be as you wish. Next year you shall go to the lake which the Indians call Athabasca, and, for all your age, you shall be factor!"

"Thank you," said the boy simply, but his face flushed with joy, and he went home with the glad news.

It was not until noon that he met Henry Blaine, and the old man came to him scowling.

"Where's my son?" he demanded. "'Tis said that you are spreading the lie abroad that he left you. Where is he?"

Never once, until that moment, had it occurred to Henry that his word would be doubted, and he was thunderstruck. The significance of Blaine's question thrust itself upon him, and he stammered out some sort of reply.

"Where is he?" demanded the old man again, grasping the boy by the shoulder. "And where are Red Cloud, and Hawk Eye,

and the other Indian? Methinks there's been some foul play out there where no man was to see!"

Henry had recovered himself by this time, and wrenched himself from the old man's grip.

"Mr Blaine," he said, "I have told the truth—nay, not all the truth; the truth is for your ears, if you want it!"

"Give it me, then," growled the man. "Where's my boy?"

And then the boy told the old man his story, and in silence Blaine listened, though it was plain that he was suffering untold agonies. There was a directness, a simplicity, an honesty about Henry's recital that carried conviction, and when he had finished Blaine turned to him.

"Come here, boy, come with me," and he led him—to the Mostyn house.

Following him in utter astonishment, Henry went inside, and saw his father jump to his feet as Blaine entered.

"What's this mean, Blaine?" he demanded. "Why do you darken my door?"

For answer Blaine turned to Henry and said:

"Have you told him, lad?"

"No, only you. Eagle's Claw, of course, and the Chippewayans know, but not one of them will tell till I give the word," was the reply.

"Then tell your father now, while I'm here,"

Blaine commanded, and towered above the youth, his face painful to look upon.

"You mean it?" Henry asked, and when the old man nodded, Henry told his father what a few minutes before he had told Blaine.

"Fetch Eagle's Claw in, lad," the boy's father said, when the story was finished; and Henry went out.

What happened between the two enemies Henry never knew, but when he came back with the Indian they were gripping hands, with a new light upon their faces.

"You may go, Eagle's Claw," Blaine said as the Indian entered, and the red man went out again. "I believe you, Henry," he turned to the boy. "There's no need for the evidence of Eagle's Claw. There's one thing only that I ask you, as an old man whose heart is broken by the son he loved: will you, for my sake, promise what you would not promise my boy, to keep silent, that the world may not know my shame?"

For answer Henry held out his hand and said quietly: "I will!"

And he knew that, so far as old man Blaine was concerned, he had helped to bury the hatchet.

## CHAPTER IX

### FROM OUT THE PAST

SUMMER had been and had passed, and the fort on the Churchill was busy, for the experiment of the previous year was to be carried out again; farther afield the traders were going, and the farthest point was that to which Henry Mostyn had elected to go. Hence, his was the first expedition to be got ready. It consisted of Henry, an old servant of the Company named Horne, Eagle's Claw, and the Lynx and his people; for the Chippewayans, on hearing that their white friend was going far off to the northwest, had placed themselves at his disposal. The chief had given sound advice, which Henry was not slow to take.

"Let the men travel light of hand, that they may hunt and keep the pot filled," the Indian had said. "Let the women work. Women are made for labour; one can haul or carry as much as two men. They can pitch your tents and mend or make your clothes! My women shall go with you to do all these things!"

Henry knew that the Indian was right,

although his English bringing up had taught him otherwise. Up there in the frozen north the women were the workers by nature, the men the feeders and the fighters.

So when, early in December, the big gates creaked open, the men of the young factor's expedition carried scarce anything but their arms, while the women helped with the sleighs; fewer dogs this time were taken, since they needed so much more food than humans, and the women could take their places. The sleighs were laden chiefly with trade goods rather than food, seeing that the Lynx, when returning to his tribe early in the year, had taken stores and cached them at various places.

Henry was in high glee when he started, but he was to know that all is not gold that glitters ere he reached his journey's end. The great river beyond the lake, which he had heard about, was a long way off, and the way thither was more trying than the way to the Reindeer had been. For all the forethought of the Lynx, food was scarce, since, at two places, they found their caches had been rifled.

"It is well," said the Indian calmly. "Someone needed the food," and Henry knew that he was right. For it was a law up there in the wild, empty wastes that did a man hunger and find food it was his, no matter who placed it there.

So the expedition pushed on hungry, despite the fact that every day the women went out with snares and the hunters went seeking game. Little was found, and Christmas that year was spent behind wind-breaks made of the sleighs, with snow-water for a meal, finished off with a pipe.

On, then, at the rate of about twenty miles a day, and early in January, when the band was four hundred miles on the road, having passed through the most barren land Henry had ever seen, having crossed frozen rivers and lakes, failing even to catch fish after smashing holes in the ice, the travellers came to an Indian encampment. Chippewayans had gone on before, and found that the Indians were friendly, though till this was known every man carried his weapons ready for battle. For the first time for many a day the travellers had a fair meal, and then, buying something to last them for a day or so's march, pushed on into the unknown again, to come to more barren lands, where meat awaited them in abundance, for the caribou were gathered there, shedding their antlers before plunging into the forests for the winter. By a law of Nature the caribou, when the hard times are due and they bethink them of going into the forests, shed their antlers, which would impede flight through the trees.

The Chippewayans organised a great drive,



in which Henry took part, and it lasted for two or three days, in the course of which sufficient meat was obtained to maintain them for many weeks.

Then on again, the women always hauling the sleighs, and so into the great forest, where wood was collected from which in due time tent-poles would be made, or frames for snow-shoes when old ones were worn out by much travelling. And so a great river was reached, where a halt was called to rest the women, and, incidentally, to allow the Indians to fashion canoes out of the great birch trees growing on the banks.

"We shall need them when we come back," Henry said, as he called the halt and got the Lynx to set his people to work.

The canoes were made light, because the way home would be by rivers where it would sometimes be necessary to portage for perhaps fifty, or maybe a hundred miles; and, to enable them to resist ice jams, these craft, which were flat-bottomed, with straight sides, and twelve feet long and two broad, were built larger at the front than behind.

Here, at an Indian village on the river, which was later given the name of the Great Slave River, a guide was hired or, rather, was pressed into service. Both the Lynx and Henry Mostyn had used all their persuasive powers to enlist a willing guide, but had failed,

and so one night the chief had gone out alone, and in the morning he came back with another red man, who, next morning when the start was made, was placed in the front sleigh with a couple of braves keeping watch over him.

Passing down the river, the party came to a lake, which the guide told them was the Athabasca.

"Over!" he said gloomily, pointing across the frozen waste, and over the lake the sleighs were hauled, the company arriving at the spot where another river began.

"The great river of which I was told," Henry cried, and knew they were nearing the journey's end; for the place he had appointed was about a hundred miles down stream, where it branched out.

And there, about ten days later, the women drew the sleighs to a standstill; a spot was fixed on for the fort to be erected, and the serious work of the next few weeks was begun, after a feast in celebration of the safe journey.

The post this year was on more ambitious lines than the little one down on the Churchill for one thing, the Indians had to be housed, and so the stockade was much larger, although every house was down at the river's edge and the doors looked out across the water. The woods rang with the axes as the men sweated at tree felling, and the women toiled bravely in dragging the trunks to the site of the encamp-

ment. Henry's part was to superintend, and this he did with all the skill of an old factor, and won the admiration of Horne. In less than a week the place was finished, the sleighs were unloaded, and the goods packed in the dry huts.

"We'd best go hunting right away, Horne," Henry said at last, "and get what we can to last us out."

"My women will fish while we go," said the Lynx.

So, armed for the chase, the men went out into the forest, Henry and his two white comrades, Eagle's Claw, and a couple of other Indians making one party, and the chief leading many of his men in another direction.

For two days Mostyn's party went through the woods but found nothing. The winter was hard, and the game seemed to have given up all hope of finding food for themselves in the forest thereabouts, for they had gone to other parts.

At the end of the second day the hunters pitched camp in the Indian manner, digging down to the moss to find a warm place on which to sleep.

"We'll go ahead for another two days," Henry told Horne, "and then if we don't——"

"Me find trail of caribou!"—Eagle's Claw, who had been nosing about some distance beyond the point where the camp was pitched,

came running in as excited as he could allow himself to be—"Trail leads across," and he pointed into the forest.

"What shall we do, Horne?" Henry asked. "Shall we wait till the morning, or push on for a while longer?"

"Reckon we can wait," said the elder man. "Eagle's Claw will be able to lead us along the trail, and if there are many of 'em it won't be difficult."

So it was arranged to remain in camp that night, and with the dim twilight of the morning the hunters were astir. Led by Eagle's Claw, they swung through the forest. On the snow the indentations made by the caribou showed clearly, and it was easy to see there were many of the animals. They were a long way off, however, for all that day the hunters travelled and did not come up with them. It was not until noon the following day that Henry, who had been in the van, and was about a quarter of a mile in front of his companions, saw the yellow-brown patches showing clear against the white background.

His keen eyes soon made out that the blotches were caribou. They were moving, and for a moment Henry feared that they had scented him, and were going off. Then his hunter's sense told him that the wind was away from the deer. It needed much restraint not to fire before the coming of his comrades, but

he knew that this would be fatal to a big bag, for at the first shot the beasts would bound off, and what meat was obtained would be got only by a long chase.

So, turning round, Henry waited, and when his friends appeared in sight, held up a warning hand. They knew what he meant, and came along cautiously.

Followed a hurried council, and then the hunters spread out in the form of a semi-circle, moving forward and taking care to keep the wind dead against them. Yard by yard red men and white moved on, and at last were within sure shooting range; then, simultaneously, a half-dozen muskets cracked, as many deer went tumbling to the ground, while the rest, scared at the re-echoing noise, bounded away. Leaving their stricken game where it fell, the hunters swept forward, loading as they went, and a stern chase began. Time and time again the muskets cracked, and ever and anon a deer went to earth, until, after about an hour and a half, the hunters had brought down some twenty fine animals.

Then back along the trampled trail they went, and, as they came to their trophies, hitched long stout thongs to them; which they passed under their arms; the frozen snow provided an easy surface over which the meat was dragged along. Even those who, like Henry, had two deer strung behind them, did

not find the going difficult, and, anyway, had it been so, they would have persisted, since the meat was so precious.

It was a happy band of hunters which pitched camp that night, and each man had his fill of the so-much-needed meat; then, throwing themselves down round the leaping fire, they went to sleep, leaving Henry Mostyn to keep watch.

For two hours the youth sat smoking, his musket held across his knees, and his ears alert for every sound. The danger was that the scent of the freshly killed meat might be caught by some hungry wolf pack, and as he sat there keeping his vigil, Henry thought grimly of that encounter with the wolves when he and Eagle's Claw, both injured, had to hold them off. Even now he could laugh at the ludicrous effect that his awful noise on the violin had had upon the snarling brutes.

By a natural process his thoughts turned to Tom Blaine, the man who had almost encompassed his destruction, and he wondered what had happened to him after he had spared his life and sent him, well provided with food, out into the snow wastes near the Nelson River. Henry had no compunction about what he had done, for it was a very general thing for trappers and traders to go out alone, and, providing they had food and weapons, they

were as safe as it was possible to be in that land of ever-present danger.

And, generous soul that he was, Henry hoped that Blaine had got through.

"If he did he'll have joined up with the North-West," he told himself, "and——"

The run of his thoughts was interrupted by a sound, so slight that a man less trained to hear everything around would not have noticed it. It came from behind him, but after the practice of the men of the wilds, he did not turn round immediately. That would be to let whoever was there, supposing it to be a man, know that he had been heard.

But after waiting for a short while, Henry got up and walked casually to the heap of branches which had been placed just a short distance from the fire; gathering some—in his left hand, while in his right he still held his musket—he turned to throw them on the fire. By turning, he was facing the direction from which the sound had come, and he looked straight before him. But there was nothing to be seen except the boles of the trees beyond the circle of light thrown by the fire.

"Probably some raccoon, maybe a wolverine attracted by the meat," he told himself as he sat down again. But he was listening still, for if it were a wolverine he knew that it would not be long before the heavily built, powerful animal would make a spring for the deer carcasses

which had been hoisted up and now hung suspended from branches of trees.

For five minutes Henry sat thus expectantly, but nothing happened. No other sound came, and he knew instinctively that the noise had been made, not by a wild animal, but by a man.

Why he did so he never could tell; perhaps it was that he had that sense of being watched which comes to a man very often, as though the eyes of the watcher gave forth some mysterious influences; but, whatever the reason, Henry suddenly turned his head, and for a moment his heart stood still. For, his body hidden behind the bole of a giant of the forest and only his head and arms visible, stood Thomas Blaine, with musket levelled straight at the boy sitting by the fire!



## CHAPTER X

### GOOD FOR EVIL

IN the first shock of surprise at seeing Tom Blaine, standing with his musket aimed straight at him, Henry Mostyn felt that the end of all things had come for him, and for a moment he was as though stupefied.

"Hands up, Mostyn," came Blaine's voice, in a whisper. "I've got you covered, and there's a dozen Indians around with their guns drawn on your men. I've only got to give the word and they'll fire. So hands up!"

For one tense moment Henry hesitated; he felt that he must seize his musket and shoot the old-time enemy who had appeared, as it were, from nowhere. And, had only his own life been at stake, the boy would have taken the risk of what might happen, but Blaine's information, that each one of the sleeping men was covered and could be shot out of hand, put a different complexion on the whole matter, and he felt that if he disobeyed the other's injunction, he would have the blood of his companions upon his conscience.



So the chagrined youth put up his hands.

"That's right!" said Blaine jeeringly, but still in a whisper. "Now listen. I don't know where your post is, and I don't care, but you've got to clear. I hold the whip hand this time, not you. You sent me packing, and I'll never forgive you. I'm going to send you packing now!"

Even in that moment of danger Henry could not refrain from thinking that even though he had, as Blaine said, sent him packing, he had yet saved his life when a word from him would have meant death; and he could not but notice the deliberate avoidance of any mention of that on Blaine's part.

"I can dictate terms, Mostyn," Blaine was saying. "I've got half a hundred Sioux with me, and they'll wipe your crowd out if I give the word. Will you go? Answer quickly, but keep your voice down—I'm not standing any fooling."

Henry's upflung hands itched to be at the throat of the man behind the tree, and to throttle the words as they issued forth, and the youngster longed to leap to his feet and rush to the attack. But there were those sleeping men to think of. With a rush it came back to Henry, as he was about to hurl defiance at Blaine, that if he did so, the men with him would be massacred by the Indians who, he had no doubt, Blaine was right in saying were

amongst the trees. To say "No!" to Blaine's ultimatum was to hazard the lives of his comrades, and, maybe, the lives of the Lynx and his people away up on the river bank; for it would not take Blaine long to discover them. On the other hand, to agree to Blaine's conditions meant sacrificing all that for which he had come out so far west—meant leading his red men back over the wild waste at the very worst time of the year—and meant that the Lynx would lose all respect for him. He could see the scorn wreathing about the mouths of the braves, and knew that for ever his name—the name which the Chippewayans revered because it belonged to the Peacemaker—would stink in the nostrils of the red men.

"I must play for time—time to think," was the thought that ran through Mostyn's brain.

"Quick, what's it to be—death?" came the whispered demand from Blaine. "I give you five seconds."

"Look here," said Henry calmly—he was cooler now, the first anguish passed—"I own you've got the drop on me, but isn't the West large enough for both of us?"

He knew that it was futile to argue thus, but it meant gaining time, and anything might happen.

"You're a fool—you, with your milk-and-water ways!" snarled Blaine. "The West isn't large enough for you and me together, and

one of us has got to clear. I'm sticking, and if you don't go willingly, well—— For the last time! , Remember, I've got the drop on——”

A sharp crack, a scream of pain, the clatter of a musket on the ground, and Blaine staggered back; and the next instant the camp was alive with quick-moving men who, snatching up their muskets as they sprang to their feet, looked about them. Henry, not knowing what had happened to save his life for the time being, was also on his feet, musket in hand.

“Indians, in the trees!” Blaine cried, and away his men went, scattering amongst the trees outside the circle of light.

Henry himself had sprung, lithe as a panther, for the tree behind which Blaine had been standing, kicked against the fallen musket, and almost trampled upon the hand of Blaine, which was groping for the weapon.

Henry was upon him in an instant, and, dropping his own musket at the same time, had his hands fast held round Blaine's throat.

“Who's got the drop now?” he breathed, unable to restrain the joy he felt at the turning of the tables. Furious to the point of distraction, he exerted all his strength.

Blaine, whose right knuckles had been grazed by the shot that had so suddenly snapped off his words, was no match for the infuriated youngster, whose blood was up, and who, in the

turmoil of his disgust, seemed to be bent upon putting an end for ever to the man who had deserted him—whose life he had saved and then who frankly avowed his intention of killing him.

They fought, these two enemies, with all the ferocity that is bred in men who live with wild nature; they churned up the snow into a messy squash, slid hither and thither, gripping each other as in vices of steel. Henry's efforts were bent on preventing Blaine from drawing the ever-ready knife from the leather belt round his waist. For Blaine, realising that he was sorely outmatched by this enemy, who was endowed with the strength of outraged dignity and generosity, was striving hard to get the steel blade. He had managed to force Henry to loosen the deadly grip on his throat, and the two were locked in an embrace of iron, and went crashing about, from tree to tree, with a force that wellnigh knocked the breath from their bodies. But still they held on, and Henry presently found himself beneath his foe, his hand torn free of Blaine's body and reaching up again for the fur-wrapped throat. Snarling, and mouthing imprecations, Blaine's right hand was uplifted—Henry caught the gleam of steel, and knew that the great moment of life or death had come. Even as Blaine's hand descended, and his body bent to give impetus to the thrust, Henry's right fist shot up, straight and strong,

and landed upon the point of Blaine's chin with a jolt that sent him backwards and caused the knife to go flashing to the ground.

Blaine lay unconscious on the churned up snow, and Henry, panting for breath, dragged him towards the fire, and, arrived there, found a queer scene. Half a dozen Sioux were standing sullen and scowling, tied to tree trunks, while a couple of others lay stiff upon the ground, and round the fire were the men who had been Mostyn's companions in the chase and, wonder of wonders, the Lynx and a dozen of his men!

"Bind this man, too," rapped Henry to Eagle's Claw, before he asked what it all meant. And, while the red man was carrying out his order, Henry turned to the Lynx.

"What means this, O brother?" he asked. "How came you here, and why?"

"We came, brother," said the Lynx imperturbably—as though it was the natural thing that he should be on hand when the pale-face needed his aid—"we came because you had been gone long, and we feared lest something had happened. Days ago my people returned from the chase laden with meat, and the white chief had not returned. So we came after him, following the trail."

"Then it was one of you that fired the shot which caught Blaine?" and he pointed to the recumbent figure of his enemy.

Without replying, the Lynx went over to Blaine, and turned him over with his foot.

"So 'tis the white fox again!" he said, as he saw Blaine's face. "The fox that was caught in the trap and then set free! I told you, Little Peacemaker," he went on, "that one day you would be sorry you gave this man his life!"

"I know you did," Henry muttered; and he realised that he was again in the position of having Blaine's life in his hands. What should he do with him this time?

"We found the trail of the Little Peacemaker and his hunters" (the Lynx continued his interrupted story), "and saw that they had gone after the caribou. Ere the sun hid his face we saw, too, other marks which ran over the trail of the Little Peacemaker. We followed, and saw men flit from tree to tree, when the fire was lighted and the hunters sat them down to feast when the chase was ended—saw them hide, these men!" and he pointed to the captive Sioux—"saw the white man, too, but knew not who he was. And we waited, my braves and I; waited and saw how that the Little Peacemaker faced his foe bravely, and then—then—the Lynx sprang!"

"Little Peacemaker thanks you, O son of Black Bear!" said Henry fervently. "Ever, when he wants you, you are there!"

"It is well," said the chief. "Are you not

the son of my father's friend? And what will you do with the fox now that he is in the trap again?"

At the words, Blaine, who had recovered consciousness, raised his head and looked around, wonderingly; his gathering wits took in the situation as he saw his companions tied to the trees, with something like thirty Chippeeways and the two white men sitting around.

And, in that moment, Blaine feared for his life; for he knew that he merited whatever punishment Mostyn might decree for him.

He hung upon the words which he knew that Henry was about to speak—would they be of life or of death?

"Listen, O brothers!" Henry began—he had not noticed that Blaine was recovered, for the trader was lying well to one side and just behind him. "Listen! Away back, in the Fort of the Great Bay, is a man who mourns for his son. He knows the truth about him—knows it only because he forced it from the lips of one who would have kept it from him: Once that man and my father were enemies, even as this man, who sought to kill me, and I are enemies. You remember, son of Black Bear, the white trader who could not win the friendship of your people, and how that the Peacemaker did? The Man who could not make Peace is the father of this my enemy. But no longer is he the enemy of the Peace-



maker; they are friends. And, for the sake of their friendship, I give my foe his life yet again!"

There was a murmur from the Indians, while old Horne looked keenly at Henry. He did not know what was behind it all, but he made a shrewd guess, and, versed in the ways of the wilds, he marvelled at the boy's generosity; he knew what had been done in similar circumstances before!

"Then once again is the Little Peacemaker, in his wisdom, doing folly!" cried the Lynx.

"'Tis not folly to seek to bury the hatchet!" cried Henry, leaping to his feet and going over to Blaine.

Then it was that he discovered that the latter was recovered from the effects of the fight, and he wondered whether he had heard. Not a sign that he had done so did Blaine give—merely gazed up at Henry, questioningly; in his heart, Blaine half believed that Mostyn had known he was listening and had said what he had to throw him off his guard and give him a false sense of security. "Therefore he maintained silence and waited.

Henry knelt by his side, and slashed at the bonds which bound him.

"Get up!" he said grimly, and the other arose.

The Chippewayans, looking on, wondered what was to happen next.

When Mostyn spoke, it was quietly but tensely; and Horne, looking at him, was sure that the boy was struggling with himself, fighting a battle against what he knew the red men thought he ought to do, and what he himself knew was the nobler part.

"Blaine," he said, "a while ago you held a musket at my head and boasted that you held the whip hand. Now, thanks to these my friends, I hold it, and can do with you what I will. Once before things were like this, and I gave you your life when it was not worth a beaver's pelt. It is worth less than that now, for one of my Chippewayans lies dead there," and he pointed to a young brave who had been killed in the scuffle. "And yet I give it back to you without conditions. I do not ask you to come back to the old Company, since I can see in your face that you won't. But you can go your way, and your men with you. I told you the West was large enough for both of us, when you would have taken my life because I would not bargain for it. Even now, I think the West can hold us both. Up on the river yonder the flag of the old Company waves; where your flag waves I do not know, neither do I care. But our ensign will stay where it is till I choose to take it back with me. Fairly, honestly, I shall try to win the friendship of the red men up here; and you can do the same without fear of me. Go!" and, walking over

to Blaine, he gave him back his musket, and, with his own knife, slashed away the bonds that held the Sioux, handed them their muskets, and then sat down.

He did not look round again to see what Blaine did; but he could hear the shuffling of snow-shoes—a shuffling that grew more distant.

One by one the Chippewayans came and sat round the camp fire, without a word.

"We found good game, brother," Henry said calmly to the Lynx, and he pointed to the carcasses in the trees.

And the red man merely grunted.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE LURE OF THE YELLOW RIVER

It was two months since the far-flung outpost had been set up on the bank of the great river—two months that had been crammed with hard work on the part of everyone in the little community. Men and women alike had been busy caulking the canoes with pitch, against the time when the return journey should be made. There had been much snaring in the woods for small game, while in little streams beaver-hunting had gone on apace; for Henry's red men had decided that they would find skins of their own. And the work had been very profitable, one of the smaller huts being already filled.

Henry, of course, as became a Company's man, knew all about beaver-hunting; but he had found it good to try his hand at it again. At night the red men, after cracking the ice and flinging a dog into the waters as a sacrifice to the Great Spirit for his blessing on the chase, snow-shoed over to the place where the beavers

houses were built. There were broken up with trenching-tools, and during this operation the beavers would escape to their washes along the banks. The next step was to find the washes. This was done by striking the ice along the bank, and the holes were known by the hollow sound given forth. Sometimes it was easy to distinguish full holes from empty ones by the motion of the water above, caused by the breathing of the beavers. When full washes were discovered, the ice was cracked, and the hunter dived his hand in—always a risky proceeding—and sometimes severe wounds were inflicted by the sharp teeth of the little animals.

In addition to providing skins, the beavers which were caught supplied some food, which, although not altogether palatable to the white men, proved not distasteful to the Indians.

At the end of the two months there arrived at the post a band of Indians who had come to the river to hunt beaver; these men came from the other side of the great river, and stood and gazed in astonishment at the stockaded fort. Henry had been the first to espy them, and, calling to the Lynx to follow, set off to cross the frozen river.

These were the first Indians who had come near the post—or, at any rate, who had been seen—and it was a foolhardy thing to go in amongst them rather than allow them to draw nearer, for they might easily prove hostile.

The chief, as he raced along by the side of Mostyn, told him so; but the boy was not to be deterred.

"If we hold back," he said, "they will think we fear them, so I go out to meet them to offer them peace"; and he jangled the two tin kettles he carried on his arm, the symbol amongst the red men for fraternal feasting.

"As the Little Peacemaker will," said the chief. "'Twas what his father did," and he showed no other signs of disapproval, until presently, as they drew nearer to the Indians, Henry saw that each man was well armed, though not with muskets—only the bows and arrows and tomahawks of the red men.

"They have not yet traded with white men!" he told the Lynx.

"All the more reason why 'tis dangerous to run the head in the snare!" grunted the Lynx.

Mostyn persisted in proceeding, however. He felt that it would be fatal to retreat now, and he spurred on ahead of the chief, so coming within fifty yards of the strangers before the Lynx caught him up.

Without a word, Henry flung his two kettles in amongst the Indians, and waited to see the result.

Stiff as statues, yet watchful as foxes, the red men looked stonily at the tin things; no man of them spoke. Then a bold spirit pulled his

bow, and a befeathered arrow pointed straight at the heart of the white youth.

Instantly Henry realised that these men knew not the meaning of the kettles, and that he was correct in his first surmise that they had not before seen white men. Like lightning, he realised that he must do something ere that sinister arrow sped on its way. But what to do he did not know. And at that moment a dog, which had been snarling down in front of the Indians, sprang forward, and Henry saw in a flash that here was his chance. Raising his musket, he pulled the trigger; the crack awoke the echoes, and the dog, even in the height of its spring, tumbled back dead, shot through the head.

Instantly there was a shouting and yelling, but not one of the red men showed as though he would fight. Thoroughly scared, everyone of them, they sprang back, looking in terror at the stick which flashed fire and killed without touching.

Quick as thought Henry reloaded; and by this time the Lynx, having come up, moved toward the red men, who only slunk back farther as he approached.

Henry hailed them in first this, and then that, Indian dialect; and presently saw the light of understanding come into their faces. Rapidly the white youth went on with his harangue:

"The pale-face comes to you as a friend," he cried, in the form of a chant, knowing how appealing, as a rule, this was to the red men.

"As a bringer of merchandise,  
The pale face knows all the earth  
And his friends shall be your friends;  
Be of good cheer!  
He will be your brother,  
His lodge shall be your lodge!  
It is peace that he brings."

As he ended, Henry snatched from the back of the Lynx an arrow, which he broke into pieces and flung up into the air.

The effect was magical.

Out of the crowd of Indians stepped an old man, who, following Mostyn's example, broke a spear and scattered the pieces as he said:

"The pale-face is a stranger,  
Yet comes, so he says, as a friend!  
His lodge is our lodge,  
And we go thither with him!"

Henry could have shouted with joy at the words, while the Lynx, standing by his side, imperturbable as ever, felt a wave of admiration go through him. He remembered how this was but the re-enactment of a scene he had witnessed—many, many years before—when the father of this pale-face was the chief player. And he was glad.



Horne and the Chippewayans in the stockade looked with amazement when Mostyn and the Lynx returned with the Indians trooping behind them. This time, seeing that he had a goodly band of men with him, Henry did not keep the Indians outside the fort, as he had done with those with whom he had made friends down on the Churchill.

"Open the gate!" he called, and through the wide-opened gate the party filed, the red men looking round in wonderment. What took their fancy most was that wellnigh every Indian inside had one of the magic sticks in his hand, and, not yet recovered from their fright, they were hesitant and nervous. Henry soon put them at their ease, however, by assuring them that only at his bidding would the fire-sticks burn.

"Am I not your friend?" he demanded.

A fine feast was spread, and pipes and tobacco distributed, and, over the pipes, Mostyn got the red men to talk. He discovered that they were an offshoot of the Athabascans, who had migrated beyond the great river, and, because the winter was hard, were migrating back to their old territory. These men were scouts—the bulk of the tribe, with women and children, being left at a spot which Henry judged was some fifty miles beyond the river.

While they were talking, Henry had been

looking at the many ornaments of yellow metal with which they were adorned; their bows were tipped with them, round their ankles and wrists were bangles. At first he took the metal for brass; but presently, when he had handled a bangle on the chief's wrist, he knew otherwise—he knew that these things were made of pure gold. Whence had these men got it—this precious metal?

The old chief, seeing the boy's interest, slipped off the bangle and gave it to him. Henry took it perforce, for to refuse the red man's gift was to fling insult at him. Expressing his gratitude, he rose to his feet, went into the great stores hut, and brought forth a knife—long, strong, and shining bright. He saw the chief's eyes glitter, and when the white youth gave it to him the old man went wild with joy. Instantly the braves with him slipped off their bangles and clamoured to give them to Henry, who, realising that they were anxious to exchange for the beautiful knives, went back and came with a plentiful supply.

Then the old chief got upon his feet, and, pointing to Henry's musket, cried:

“Behold, pale-face, who loveth the yellow metal!  
Give me but one of the sticks that flash fire;  
And I, White Wolf, will show you where the  
rivers run full of the yellow dirt.”

Horne leaned forward in expectancy, and

Henry's face lighted up with wonder. What was this he heard? This red man knew where the rivers were full of gold! And he would take him thence for the gift of a musket. Here was something worth far more than pelts, and he realised that he might go back to the Churchill laden with gold.

But the wisdom of the serpent was his at that moment. He must not be as free with the fire-sticks as he was with the knives. Clearly, the possession of these invested him with a power over the new-comers, and he must keep up that impression.

"The pale-face's friend asks much," he said. "He likes not to part with his fire-sticks, which can bring down the deer in its flight and the buffalo in its stride; the stick which can strike the foe, and he knows not whence comes the death!"

In such a strain did the boy hold forth, arousing the desire of the Indian to possess but one of the muskets, and at the same time impressing him with the reluctance of the white man to part with it. But, in the end, on the chief proclaiming the fact that he, or some of his braves, would indeed lead the white man to the rivers which ran with yellow stuff, Henry clinched the bargain by saying:

"Tell me how far are the rivers, and how long the journey, and then I will give the fire-stick so that you lead me thither."

And before that meeting broke up a pact had been arranged between the red men and the white youth, that the latter should be guided to the rivers of the yellow metal. Then the strangers were allowed to sleep within the stockade; though, lest they should (in their desire to possess more fire-sticks than the one handed over to their chief) take it into their heads to fall upon the traders while they slept, Henry—after having, as was his custom, gathered all the Indians together for prayers to the Great Spirit—took the precaution to mount several guards. He explained to the chief that this was the usual course. Although the old man grunted his approval, Henry was never sure whether he really believed him.

The next day and the following were spent in making preparations for the journey that Henry had decided to take. A couple of sleighs were loaded with food and two more with trade goods; half a dozen of the Chippewayans, together with Eagle's Claw, who insisted on accompanying his young master, were selected to go with him; then, leaving the post in the care of Horne, Mostyn boldly set forth into the unknown.

Of his own free will, White Wolf had left behind half a dozen hostages, among them being two of his own sons, and this served to allay some of the fears that the Lynx had for his young friend's safety.

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"If the Little Peacemaker comes not back ere three moons are past," the Chippewayan had said solemnly, "then will I come to find him."

## CHAPTER XII

### TOM BLAINE GETS SOME NEWS

DURING the several weeks that had elapsed since his encounter with Henry Mostyn, Blaine (whose post had been set up a considerable distance down the river) had been very busy. He was determined to make the most of the opportunity which Mostyn had given him.

"'Fair trading,' Mostyn said," he muttered to himself many a time. "Fair trading I'll give him!"

And Blaine's idea of fair trading was a queer one. The Indians he had with him were warlike Sioux, some of them men who had been to those parts before and knew large numbers of Indians in the country around. These men he sent out on a dire mission.

"Go, call your friends!" he told them. "Tell them that a white man has come into their country, bringing warlike Chippewayans, and that he is intending to fall upon them, burn their lodges, and massacre their squaws and children. And tell them that I—the man who comes to trade peacefully with them—will lead

them to battle against the man who comes with fair words, but whose fire-sticks will be used against them."

And so, for many miles around, the Sioux went and spread the tidings that sent the red men flying for war-paint and feathers, set them dancing the war-dance; after which they went off along the trail that led to the Blaine post.

Thus it happened one night, just after Henry Mostyn left his fort, Tom Blaine set off through the forest towards the Hudson Bay Company's post. He had previously sent scouts to spy the land and find out just where the post was situated, so that, led by these men, he was able to come within a short distance unseen by anyone in the fort. With him he had nigh on three hundred Indians; and he was going to make war—bitter war—to the death. The very generosity of Mostyn had inflamed his passions and made him reckless of everything, forgetful of everything except that he would end his foe's career somehow. And the fact that away back on the Churchill his father had made friends with old Mostyn told him, as clearly as anything could, that the old man had disowned him.

Only about fifty of the Indians with Blaine carried firearms; but he hoped that the element of surprise, together with superiority of numbers, would balance matters. Many of the red men carried pine torches, unlighted as yet, but to be lighted when the time came, and flung into the

stockade in the hope of setting fire to the branch-roofs of the huts.

Creeping through the trees like silent foxes, the red men came near the stout stockade, and could see Chippewayans sitting around the fire smoking. Back went the scouts with the news that the time was not ripe; the enemy were not yet gone to sleep.

So for over two hours the Indians lurked in the woods, silent as death, but alert, and scouts having been sent forward again, and returning with the information that the enemy were asleep—with the exception of one man, who was evidently the guard—a move forward was made.

Reaching the stockade, the Indian whom Blaine knew to be the finest shot with the bow, received a whispered instruction to shoot the watchman. There was a sharp twang as his bow was loosed—a feathered arrow whizzed through the air, and, without a sound, the Chippewayan went down beside the fire.

Then Blaine's Indians quietly tried to scale the stockade, but their scouts had overlooked one thing: all round the wall of wood were little thin cords, which, on being touched, set bells a-jingling in the huts; and even at the moment that they thought they were on the verge of victory, out from the huts sprang armed Chippewayans.

There was no longer need for concealment, and no use for it either. With shrill



war-cries the Indians fired their muskets, shot their arrows. The pine torches were lighted and pitched inside the fort; and, brave although deluded, the Blaine men sprang for the stockade. Some got over, others fell tumbling back, shot by arrow or musket. Soon the air was filled with the shrieking of men in mortal combat, the crackling of muskets, the barking of dogs; while, in the huts, the Chippeawan women huddled, trembling with fear—for they knew what would be their fate if the foe were victorious.

The Lynx stood forth, a valiant fighter on that night of terror. The flaming roofs of the huts showed him clearly, but he seemed to bear a charmed life; for, though he was always where the fight was fiercest, he was not even wounded. For hours the fight held on, and the battleground was inside the stockade for most part of the time.

Blaine's Indians were filled with courage, and filled, too, with hatred of the white man who, they had been told, was come to rob them and kill them. They fought as men fight for their homes and their families; but, for all their numbers, for all their valiant ferocity, they fought in vain. Not a man of them who entered the stockade left it alive, except those who were wounded and spared, and sent away when the battle was over.

Even while the fight was raging Horne and

the Lynx set the women to work to put out the fires in the roofs of the huts, knowing that unless this were done all the stores would be destroyed: and, recovered from their first fright, the brave Indian squaws fought the flames while their menfolk fought the foe.

It was some time before the Chippewayan chief realised that this was no ordinary raid by Indians on the warpath. It was only when, during a slight lull in the fight, he caught sight of Blaine that he understood what was behind it, and the red man's fury was terrible to look upon.

"See!" he cried to his braves. "See, 'tis the white fox who tried to kill the Little Peacemaker who has done this!"

And then, even as Blaine urged his Indians on again to the attack, the Lynx, leaping over the bodies of fallen men which littered the ground inside the stockade, bounded high over the wooden wall, and, followed by his men, hurled himself at the oncoming foe. If the battle had been fierce before it was as nothing compared with the fight that now raged; and, in the end, Blaine's Indians were scattered and went fleeing into the woods. During the fight the Lynx had tried to reach Blaine, but ever the wary trader managed to elude him. If the Chippewayan was anxious to get at Blaine, the latter was no less anxious to find Mostyn. All through the battle he had been seeking him,

but never finding him. Where was he? Had he gone on some hunting expedition? Blaine did not know, and he could have wept with very rage as he thought that, whatever the outcome of the fight, his purpose had failed! Mostyn would escape his vengeance—for a time, anyway.

But the fight had gone against Blaine at last, and when he saw which way the wind was blowing, he bolted through the wood, leaving his braves to do as they liked!

For some distance the Chippewayans followed the fleeing enemy; but at last, worn out by their exertions during the battle, they returned to the fort, all except one. He was an Athabaskan who, suddenly confronted by a dark figure which leaped from behind a tree, was crashed over the skull with the butt end of a musket, and when he came round found himself trussed like a partridge for the roasting.

It was a terrible scene to which he awakened. Sitting round a fire, inside a stockade (so similar to that which had been raised by the Chippewayans, that at first the captive almost imagined himself there), were a number of Indians, most of them bearing marks of the battle, and, in the centre of them, was a white man, whom the red man remembered having seen amongst those who attacked the fort.

"Was it not as I told you?" the pale-face was saying. "Has not the white man up there

on the river brought Chippewayans from afar, armed all of them? Think you that if you, in your hundreds, could not overcome them when you fell on them by night, you could repel them when they fell upon you? I tell you the white man is as a fox who would steal upon you and rob your lodges of your squaws and papooses!"

In this strain did Blaine harangue the Indians who had suffered so heavily at the hands of the Chippewayans, and the captive had no doubt that, while he had been unconscious, the red men had been complaining and laying the blame of their defeat upon the pale-face. But, though he spoke long and earnestly, with all the rough eloquence and craftiness of his nature, Blaine could not bluff the Indians, and at last he realised it.

Only grunts greeted his words, and presently the red men, gathering their weapons together, turned away with scorn written upon their faces, and filed away into the morning mist!

Blaine's face was a picture, and for a while he stamped and raved, so that the men he had left—some of the Sioux whom he had brought with him, and who had come scot-free from the fight—looked at him in astonishment. At last he flung out his arms wide and cried to them:

"Listen, O brothers! The Great Spirit has decreed the defeat of those who were our friends. But he has left us to carry on the work. Are you with your white brother?"

He ceased speaking and waited for their answer. From one to the other the Sioux looked, and then, as one man, cried out their allegiance to him.

"It is well," said Blaine. "Even yet we will twitch the tail of the fox!"

But in his heart he was wondering what had happened that Mostyn had not been at the stockade; and suddenly remembering his captive—for it was he who of set purpose had sprung like a wraith upon the Athabaskan—he turned to him, and towering above him threateningly, demanded to know where the "Mighty Little Peacemaker," as he sneeringly called Mostyn, was.

Silent as the grave the Indian remained, and Blaine worked himself into a fine fury when he could get no answer. At last his patience failed utterly, and he ordered the Sioux to put him to the torture.

"Speak, and all shall be well!" He gave the Athabaskan one last chance, but still silence.

"The fire!" commanded Blaine curtly, and the Sioux took their prisoner and bound him to a tree trunk. They kindled a fire some distance away, gradually heaping it up till it touched his feet, from which they had taken the moccasins. Then, while the flames licked up at him, they danced wildly round, whooping, shrieking, halloaing madly. Then, ceasing

this, they advanced towards the Athabaskan with burning sticks, which they thrust at him, but still the red man kept silent. Not<sup>3</sup> even when one of them rammed a thick stump, sparking and hissing, into the back of his hand, did he show signs of relenting. Meanwhile Blaine stood by with a cruel smile wreathing his mouth.

"'Tis your last chance," he said presently. "Tell where the white man is else these, my men, shall burn your eyes in their sockets!"

At his words the Indian winced. He knew from what had happened already that the white man might fulfil his threat—and even then his loyalty to Mostyn (who had ingratiated himself with the Athabascans) was so great that he would not speak. Then a Sioux approached him with a spear, which he had thrust into the fire and made red hot. Nearer and nearer the man drew, until the glowing end was within half an inch of the Athabaskan's right eye, scorching his face and searing the eyelid. Then, even as the Sioux seemed about to thrust it in, the tortured captive, the limit of even his courageous endurance reached, cried in agony:

"I tell!"

And he swooned away with the pain of his legs and hands, which were horribly burned by the fire beneath him.

When, in due course, the Athabaskan came round again, he told reluctantly of how the

pale-face had gone far across the river with Indians, to seek a river of yellow metal. By much pumping, Blaine learned all there was to learn; and putting two and two together, realised that Mostyn had probably gone off to seek gold.

Immediately the cupidity of the man was aroused. He forgot the purpose for which he had come, forgot the claims of the Company whose servant he was, and decided to sally forth to seek that golden river. Unlike Mostyn, who could leave a white comrade to care for the trade which would begin before he could get back, Blaine had no one to leave; and unlike Mostyn, who, in those circumstances, would have stayed behind until the trading was done, Blaine decided to desert his post.

"Will you follow?" he asked the Sioux. "See, all those goods!" and he pointed at the stores huts. "All those goods shall be yours when we return!"

For Blaine had no fear that the goods would be stolen. He did not fear that the Indians whom he had attacked would raid the place, even in his absence; for, dastard at heart that he was, he relied upon the influence of Mostyn, even though he were not there, to restrain the Chippewayans!

As one man the Sioux agreed to go with him; and that day preparations were made for the journey into the unknown.

How correctly Blaine had appraised the influence of Mostyn over the Chippewayans may be shown by the fact that when, the day after the attack on the stockade, a council was held, and some of the Indians were for going immediately to take vengeance on the white man, the Lynx uprose, and although it was easy to see what his true feelings were, he said:

"Listen, O my people! The Little Peacemaker, were he here, would tell us what to do. Nor you nor I can tell what that would be, but it shall not be said that I led my people to war when the son of the Peacemaker would have had peace! Would he not tell us again that the Great Spirit Whom he worships would have us return good for evil? This Jesus, of Whom he tells, is a Man of Peace, not War! So will we wait till the day when he comes back to us from the river of yellow metal!"

During the discussion the Indians who had been wounded and left behind in the stockade had sat, bound every one of them, and listened; and as they listened they saw a new light. The words these men spoke were not the words of men who came to rob and to kill. The mysterious white man who was their chief—who was he that, in his absence, these fierce warriors, who had been attacked so terribly, should refrain from going forth to take vengeance?

"Hear me, O chief of a thousand scalps," cried one of the prisoners suddenly. "It was



told us by the pale-face who led us hither that the White Chief here had come to spring like a panther upon our lodges and kill our squaws and children. And yet we hear you, even now, saying that he who is away would have peace. The counsel, surely, is dark, and we cannot see."

The Lynx, who had been glowering at the man speaking, waited a moment before answering.

"The white fox, your master, spoke ill," he said at last. "The Little Peacemaker, our master, has not scalps of foes hanging before the door of his lodge, but spears broken in peace," and he pointed to the large hut which was the home of Mostyn, and where there were hung the pieces of a broken spear. "He came to bring peace and trade, not war and death."

For a long while the discussion went on, and at last the Lynx, aided by Horne, succeeded in convincing the Indians of the peaceful intentions of the traders. Whereupon the chief who had spoken before said:

"Then will we be friends of your friend! No more shall our arrows fly in anger at you. We go, if the chief of many scalps will have it so, we go back to our lodges and tell our people that the pale-face in the forest spoke lies, and that the people he led us against are our friends!"

A short council was held by the Chippe-

wayans, and Horne gave the casting vote in favour of the liberation of the strangers, who were eventually sent away, laden with gifts.

In such fashion did the fame of Henry Mostyn go throughout the country there; for the captives who had been given liberty—many belonging to tribes who had only been banded together by a common fear—went about at peace with each other, and told of a pale-face trader who awaited them and their pelts away up on the great river.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ALONE AMIDST THE SNOWS

THE first two days of the march of Mostyn and his friends were uneventful, and at the end of the second day the temporary encampment of White Wolf was reached. Mostyn received a great welcome, and the braves were hugely delighted with the fire-stick which he and his own men, as well as their chief, carried.

White Wolf himself made a great show of the dread lightning-stick; for Henry had shown him how to use it, and the Indian wasted much powder and shot in exhibiting his skill. The women of the tribe were won over by Mostyn's presents of mirrors and beads and so on, though all looked hungrily at the big sleigh which was piled with food.

"They hunger, brother," Henry said to Eagle's Claw, on the afternoon of the day following his coming to the encampment, whose red tepees made a fine patch of colour on the never-ending snow.

"Did not their chief say they go back beyond the great river because they find not food enough?" the Chippewayan answered.

Henry walked over to the White Wolf's tepee, and, being told to enter, went in and sat in silence for a while, smoking the pipe which the Indian handed to him. Presently he spoke.

"The White Wolf has offered his pale-face friend," he said, "fifty men to go to the yellow river; but fifty men will need food, much food, and the while their squaws will die of hunger on the snows!"

The chief looked at him and grunted assent, as though the death by starvation of a few women was nothing, so that the pale-face was served.

"But the friend of White Wolf cannot go forth knowing this," Henry went on. "He will take with him but ten men, and leave behind him all the food that he can spare. In the rivers we may find fish—and in the woods, who knows?—some game to feed a few which would be useless to feed many. The pale-face has spoken. Choose for him, then, the men to go," and the young trader, without waiting for dissent, got upon his feet and departed.

Thus it was that when, next day, Henry left the Athabaskan camp he had with him but two of his own men besides Eagle's Claw and ten of the new-found friends. The three sleighs were drawn by dogs and men; for Henry had left some of his animals with White Wolf to be taken back to the post on the river, and he had also given the Indian a note—at which the chief

looked in wonder—telling Horne to hand over to him some food to help the tribe on its journey.

"It will speak!" Henry had told the chief, who fingered the note in awe, "and will get you food!"

Across the frozen waves the little party struck, for mile on mile, for day on day, in the teeth of driving winds that cut through the fur-lined coats and froze the breath upon the cheek. Snow-shoes wore out, and were repaired or replaced by new ones, roughly made at night; more often than not fires were impossible, and for days the men lived on pemmican, which they sucked and chewed, for drink having to content themselves with snow scooped up in their hands. Dogs died of hunger and hard work, and provided meals for their comrades in harness.

And then came disaster, or so it seemed to Mostyn.

Awaking one morning, about a month after leaving White Wolf's camp, Mostyn found that but three of the Athabascans remained with him, and his own men. The rest had gone, taking with them half the dogs and one of the sleighs laden with trade goods and the major portion of the little food that remained.

"Up!" he cried to Eagle's Claw, and the red man sprang from his sleep, followed by the others. "We are betrayed! See!" he cried

to the Athabascans, "your brothers have gone, leaving us just when the end is in sight. We go to find them!"

His word was law. The three Athabascans who were left were sons of White Wolf and knew they were pawns of their father's honour. They had known nothing of the intention to desert, else they would have warned the pale-face, and now, when he was going after the cowards, they were with him heart and soul.

"You will stay here and mind the dogs," Henry told Eagle's Claw and one of his other Indians. "I and these Athabascans will follow the trail!"

So, taking sparing portions of the food left, Mostyn and four men set off on snow-shoes, following the clearly marked trail of the deserters. Despite the fact that he was traveling without the sleighs, Henry knew that the Indians must have had a good start, and that the chase would be a stern one. It was galling to know that just when, as one of the Athabascans had told him the previous day, another few days' journeying would see them by the bank of the yellow river, this thing should have happened; but he told himself that once he got to these deserters he would be able to win them over.

At noon that day the pursuers came to what was clearly the site of a hasty camp pitched by

the fleeing Athabascans; for the place had the appearance of a shambles.

"They've killed some of the dogs, if not all!" Henry said angrily. "On, we must catch them!"

So on again, to come that night to the sleigh, rifled of some of its cargo, but deserted, as though it had proved too heavy for the runaways.

"That means they've killed the rest of the dogs," said Henry savagely. "See, there is more blood, and the trail holds no marks of paws."

It was true—only the mark of the snow-shoes could be seen, leading straight towards a rocky, barren land, through which Henry remembered they had come some time before.

Hurriedly the sleigh was put in order and left in the trail, to be picked up on the return journey, and then, realising that it was the best place in which to camp for the night—it was impossible to proceed farther because the travelling had been so severe—the pursuers pushed on into the rocky district, and, sheltering behind boulders, went to sleep, all so utterly done up that no watch was set.

It was the one oversight on Mostyn's part, but how was he to know that the men they were chasing had exhausted themselves and camped that night a few hundred yards from them? And how was he to know that they had

been seen by the Athabascans from behind the rocks where they were sheltering from the chilly north blast, and that a scout had been out to see who the new-comers were?

The Athabascans held a council of war when they found out that their white master was on their trail.

"The pale-face will catch us," one said, "and his fire-stick will speak death! Let us fall upon him even while he sleeps!"

But wiser counsels prevailed. They knew that if they went back to White Wolf alone, and the pale-face never returned, vengeance would be wreaked upon them. When they had deserted they had consoled themselves with the thought that somehow the determined pale-face would get through and come back from the yellow river, but—if they killed him—where could they hide from the vengeance of the Chippewayans?

"No," said the eldest amongst them. "'Tis not to be that we kill the pale-face. Better that, weak though we are, we go on!"

And on they went, but, eager to get away, they betrayed themselves. Slipping over the rocks, they loosened boulders, which went hurtling and crashing from point to point and awoke the echoes in the ravine.

Up sprang the Chippewayan in Mostyn's party, and awoke his comrades. It needed but a few moments' listening to assure them all



that someone was hastening on feet of fear, and Mostyn realised that in all probability the Athabascans had seen the pursuers and were fleeing pell-mell.

"Come!" he cried, and led the way through the ravine.

For a mile the grim chase went on, the pursuers not seeing their quarry but hearing them, and knowing they were on the trail all right. And then Henry stumbled, his right snow-shoe having jammed between two well-grounded rocks; over he went with a low cry of agony.

Instantly his men pulled up and came back to him. Feverishly they examined the leg, and every touch made Henry bite his lips to restrain the cry of pain. He tried to get upon his feet, but fell in a heap to the ground again.

The ankle was injured—the same ankle that had been sprained that day when he had tumbled over the precipice and been saved by Eagle's Claw—and he realised that he could not move. And they must catch up with those fleeing Athabascans, since the surest guide was amongst them!

Mostyn quickly made up his mind.

"Go—follow them, and bring them back!" he said to his men. "Stay only to dig me a hole down to the moss, and I will wait till you return!"

They protested, argued, but all to no avail.

The pale-face was determined, and, since his word was law to them, they obeyed. The hole was dug, and into it, clutching his musket, Henry crawled, bidding his men to hurry.

Then, without a look behind them, the red men sped on through the night, and it was only when they had disappeared that Mostyn realised his situation. He was alone, in a barren land, unable to move except he crawled—alone in the snows, with (as he knew) the possibility of being attacked by hungry wolf packs, or Indians who might prove hostile to any white man. Involuntarily he shuddered, and a great temptation seized him to call back the men he had sent away. He restrained himself, however. He could not show the white feather now—he had chosen his part and must abide by it!

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CAPTIVE

THROUGHOUT that night Henry Mostyn lay in the hole in the snow, the pain of his ankle proving wellnigh unbearable. The little food that he had he could not eat, his stomach turning sick at the bare thought of food. Morning came misty and cold, and still his men had not returned. A temporary fear gripped him, lest they too should prove traitorous. He told himself, however, that his Chippewayan, at least, would never desert him, and that the only thing that would keep him back was death. Then, too, came the thought that if he were long away from the camp, pitched miles to the westward, Eagle's Claw would come out to seek him. But would he be in time?

Mostyn realised that inaction might bring death from cold upon him, but he could do nothing except scramble out of his hole and crawl back and forth to maintain circulation. At intervals he did this between the coming of dawn and midday, and it was when he was back again in his hole for the last time, and trying to

chew food which nauseated him, that he heard a halloaing which set his blood tingling. Forgetting even the pain of his ankle, he sprang from the hole and went sprawling on the ground, but he fell with his face in the direction from which the call had come, and the sight that he saw made his heart leap.

For, coming towards him, were the Athabascans and the Chippewayan he had sent away, and with them—wonder of wonders—the deserters! . . . Henry told himself in that moment that even his most sanguine expectations had not really risen to this; it had been but a forlorn hope at the best.

He lay where he was till the Indians came up with him, for he was unable to rise now. Gently the Chippewayan lifted him up and supported him. Mostyn waited for the red men to speak; but, although the deserters looked sheepish, they said nothing. And the loyal Indians also kept silent.

Henry took the cue, and not a word of reproof escaped his lips.

"Lay me on a blanket," was all he said, "and drag me to where we left the sleigh."

Without a word his order was obeyed; and then, as though vying with each other to wipe out the stain of their sin, the deserters who had come back haggled for the honour of hauling the extempore sleigh. Two of them at last seized the long thongs at the front, and began

to pull the blanket along, while two others came behind also, holding ropes. And in that way was Mostyn taken to the sleigh, his Indians lifting him bodily over the roughest parts of the trail.

Arrived at the sleigh, he was made comfortable upon it, and the Indians man-hauled it back along the trail over which—such a little while before—they had been running away. By nightfall they had pitched a camp, and the morrow would see them back with Eagle's Claw. They managed to build a fire, and with the Chippewayan as guard, slept the sleep of exhaustion, although, time and again, Henry awoke and writhed with the pain of his foot.

It was at one of these moments of agony that he became aware of two points of light which caught the gleam of the fire; and watching them for a while, the young trader realised that they were eyes, but whether of man or beast he did not know. Fascinated, he watched them, and then another set of twin lights appeared at a different point, and then another; and, horror of horrors, they were drawing nearer—closing in! The very awe of it all gripped the youth, and he was speechless. Then, raising himself upon his elbow, he picked up his musket; but, even as he did so, there arose a hideous yelling, and he realised that the eyes were the eyes of men, not animals.

Muskets cracked, heavy shot plunked dully

into the frozen ground; arrows sang, and before the Athabascans could spring to their feet the foe had closed in. Down went the Chippe-  
wayan, and four of the Athabascans; but queerly enough, no shot or arrow caught Mostyn, who, sitting up, was firing as rapidly as he could load.

Swarms of Indians seemed to be there, and a fierce battle ensued between them and the Athabascans, who, however, were so terribly outnumbered that, at last, those who were not killed outright, took to their heels. One of White Wolf's sons, as he turned to flee, saw Mostyn still firing, and ran to him.

Without a word he bent low, and picked up the white youth, as though to hoist him on to his shoulder and carry him away—courageous act, but futile! An arrow came whizzing through the air, and the Athabaskan fell back with a groan. Then the enemies went round the little camp, and those Athabascans who were wounded were butchered before the eyes of the white trader, whose weapon by this time had been torn from his hands, and so he was helpless to do anything.

A great wave of anger swept over him, and he tried to rise, as though he would hurl himself upon these butchers; but a voice came from behind him, which almost made his heart stand still:

"I should sit down, Mostyn!"

It was the voice of Thomas Blaine, and at that moment the trader stepped forward and came to a standstill in front of Mostyn.

"So we meet again, you Mostyn pup!" he snarled. "And once more I've got the whip hand!"

Mostyn looked at him with scorn.

"And it is a hand that is stained with blood," he said swiftly, and then turned away:

Blaine, his face livid with rage, sprang forward as though he would strike him; then, drawing back again, said:

"That sort of talk won't do you any good, you dog. A word from me, and you'll be as one of those," and he pointed to the dead Athabascans. "You thought, maybe, when you sent me away that I'd make tracks for Fort William, but the Blaines are not that sort. You thought you'd be able to go seek that gold without any trouble from me."

At the mention of the gold Mostyn's eyes gleamed. This, then, was the reason for Blaine's presence. By some means he had obtained information of the coming of the Athabascans, and of the expedition on which he, Mostyn, was going. Was there, then, a traitor at the post? Naturally Henry knew nothing of the strife down the river, and the only explanation he could think of was that someone had gone out to Blaine and told him all.

Blaine's next words, however, seemed to put a new complexion on matters.

"I've wiped out your precious post," the man said. "There are not two logs on one another, and as for your precious Chippewayans, those who're not dead have gone back the way they came. I've got you, Mostyn, got you, and you'll never escape again!"

Then, turning to his men, he shouted out orders which set them harnessing up the sleigh, on to which Mostyn was flung; and then, having stamped out the camp fire, the party moved away across the snows, leaving the dead Athabascans unburied.

Several hours later the band entered an Indian encampment, and Mostyn recognised the red men there for Crees. Without a word he was flung into a tepee and left alone, the precaution having been taken of binding him securely.

Outside there was a babble of voices, and Henry, listening intently, began to see light. He was able to join together the loose ends, and discovered that Blaine had hit his trail some hours before the attack, and had followed to see who the strangers might be. It was when the camp fire was lit that he and a few of his Sioux and Crees had gone forward to spy out the land, and Blaine had evidently been wellnigh mad with delight when he recognised Mostyn. He had given the word



for the camp to be attacked, with what result we know.

Henry was not to know for many a long day that, starting from his deserted post on the river, Blaine had made a forced march, led by the captured Athabaskan, and had succeeded in reaching the neighbourhood where Mostyn's Indians had deserted him.

Naturally Blaine did not know this; neither did he know that Eagle's Claw and another Indian were waiting for the return of Mostyn. Arriving at the Cree village Blaine had, by dint of many presents, won over the red men, who vowed they knew where the yellow river he sought was, and promised to lead him to it by a short way.

Lying in his prison tent, Mostyn heard what was to happen to him.

"While some of your braves come with me to the yellow river," he heard Blaine saying, "the rest shall abide here and keep my prisoner; for there is that which I shall do unto him, when the time comes, that shall make your hearts rejoice. To-morrow I leave you for the river; but I shall return—into your keeping I give my prisoner."

"It is well," cried the red men. "The dog shall be kept till the pale-face returns."

## CHAPTER XV

### A RESCUE IN THE NIGHT

AWAY up along the trail, Eagle's Claw waited for three days; and when Mostyn did not return, he took counsel with the Athabaskan.

"The Little Peacemaker," he said, "returns not. I go seek him. Stay you with the dogs till I return."

And the red man struck off down the trail. Blacknose howled, and strained at his tether, and his voice seemed to strike some chord in the Indian's brain. He turned back, as though he would release the wolf-hound and take him with him. But Eagle's Claw guessed that the dog might prove an encumbrance; so he left him there, and took the lone trail.

At last he came to the scene of the night encounter. The soul of the red man was rent with anguish at the sight of the many dead Athabascans, with not a few also of Sioux and Crees. He went from body to body, seeking that of his master, but not finding it.

"Wounded prisoner!" Eagle's Claw muttered to himself; and then, having made sure that all the Athabascans were really dead, he swept down the new trail, the trail made by

Crees and Sioux. He went swiftly, for night was coming on now, and he wanted to see, before darkness set in, where the trail led to. At last, in the far distance, he saw the tops of the tepees, and knew that he was at the end of his trail.

But what to do? How to find out if Mostyn really were within that encampment?

Into the rocky district Eagle's Claw went, and scrambled up on to a high hill from which he would be able to look down on to the camp when day came again. All through the night the Indian lay, hidden securely in a cave; and when morning broke, the red man, worming himself to the opening, looked out towards the camp. There was great bustle—something was afoot, he could tell; the head feathers told him that there were Sioux and Crees there, and he knew that he was probably right in supposing that the men who had attacked Mostyn's camp had come hither.

For a long time he waited, and then, from amongst the many moving figures, he picked out a white man. His native wit immediately told him that, strange though it seemed, this pale-face might be he whose life the Little Peacemaker had so often saved. He was verified in this when presently, at the head of a long train of sleighs, man-hauled and dog-hauled, the pale-face moved out of the encampment, and he recognised Blaine.

The heart of the red man knew fear for his master, and he scanned anxiously every one of the sleighs—each one of the moving figures—but never a sign could he see of Mostyn.

"They hold him captive in the village," was the decision to which Eagle's Claw came, after the sleighs had all filed away across the interminable snows. But, if that were so, in which of those red tepees was he?

The red man waited all through the morning, and at midday he saw some women, bearing steaming food, go towards a tepee almost in the heart of the circle of tents.

"He is there!" murmured Eagle's Claw, and he marked the site of the tent; and then, sure of his ground now, calmly went back into the cave and went to sleep.

Night came at last, and the fires of the encampment glowed clear in the crisp stillness, which was broken presently by the singing and dancing of the red men. Eagle's Claw crawled to the cave mouth and watched, a grim smile upon his lips. He waited until the paroxysm of the dancers was over, and all had filed into the tepees to sleep. In the firelight he could see that one man alone remained outside, and he was sitting before a fire in front of the tent in which Eagle's Claw had decided the prisoner was. The presence of this sentinel confirmed the Indian in his suspicion.

Waiting long enough to give the people time

to get right off to sleep, Eagle's Claw crept down the hillside, reached the foot of it, and then wriggled silently across the intervening yards, always keeping in such a position that no light from a fire should fall upon him. Yard by yard he crept towards the encampment, and at last reached the nearest tent. He paused then for a moment, and then crawled past it; he had picked his point well, for the prison tent was only about ten yards away from the one to which he had come.

Not a sound did the writhing figure make, and Eagle's Claw came to within a yard of the Indian at the fire, who, evidently gorged with food, was nodding and nodding. . . . As quickly as a panther, and as silently, Eagle's Claw was upon him, his iron-like hands gripped around the man's neck. . . . The terrific pressure eased, and the Cree lay still upon the ground.

Then, lifting the flap of the tepee, Eagle's Claw went inside, with a muttered:

"Quiet! 'Tis Eagle's Claw!"

Startled by the sudden appearance of someone he had not seen coming, Henry Mostyn gasped; and then, at the words of the Indian, breathed again.

Working rapidly, the Indian slashed away the thongs that bound legs and arms, and then, getting on his feet again, said:

"Rise, brother!"

Forgetting his ankle again, the young trader tried to do so, but gasped with the pain, and would have fallen had not Eagle's Claw caught him.

A few words explained the situation to the Indian, and Henry said quietly:

"Go, brother, 'tis of no avail, for I cannot walk!"

For answer the Indian breathed in his ear:

"You can crawl like a snake from here, brother. Come!" and led the way out of the tent.

After him went Mostyn, his heart in his mouth, for he expected to hear every second a blood-curdling yell, since the labouring of his painful breath seemed like a thunder-clap. But nothing happened to stop their progress, and presently the two men were at the foot of the hill.

"And now, brother?" Henry asked, turning to Eagle's Claw.

For answer the Indian stooped down, turned his snow-shoes round, and then, getting up, bent low again, and pulled the white youth's arms around his neck, lifted himself up, and without a word made off along the trail.

Henry knew his idea in turning the snow-shoes round—their marks would mingle with the others on the trail, and when the escape was discovered the Crees would be put off the

scent long enough, perhaps, to allow the two men to get to a place where they could defend themselves.

As though gifted with the strength of Hercules, the red man held on the trail, hour after hour, pausing seldom, and ignoring Henry's demands that he be left while the red man went on alone. All through the night was that journey continued, and the Indian seemed not to tire, though the burden must have been a terrific strain on him. On and on, even when the morning came; and then on still until night. And then, and only then, would Eagle's Claw consent to rest a while.

"A little," he said quietly. "Just a little!"

And a little indeed it was; for within an hour Henry found himself once more on the man's back, and going along the trail that he knew led to where the sleighs had been left. During the journey he had told the red man all that had happened, and he could feel the muscles of the Indian's neck tauten as the story was told. But not a word did Eagle's Claw say.

At last—at long last—the sleighs! And to his unbounded joy, Henry saw that not only was the one Athabaskan there, but also five of the men who had been with him in the fight with Blaine's Crees, and who had managed to escape.

Eagle's Claw dropped his burden a hundred yards from the sleighs, and went down in a

heap himself, and lay asleep for wellnigh twelve hours thereafter. And while he was sleeping, Henry (who had been fetched in by the Athabascans) had his ankle attended to, and found that it was not so bad as he had imagined, though it was impossible to walk on it yet.

"The brothers of the White Chief hide their faces in shame," said one of the Athabascans, stepping forward. "We ran like children from the foe."

Mostyn looked up at that, but there was no anger on his face.

"Nay," he cried, "not as babes did they run. They fought as becomes the braves of White Wolf."

And there the matter rested.

Mostyn, sitting before a camp fire, waiting for Eagle's Claw to awaken, was forming his plans. The fact that Blaine had learned the news of the yellow river was a serious one, but one that had to be faced; for not for a single moment did Henry waver in his determination to continue the journey. One of the Athabascans knew the way to the river, he said, though the way that he knew led through the country of a tribe hostile to the Athabascans. The best guide had been killed by Blaine's Indians. Even this did not shake Mostyn, and when Eagle's Claw awoke refreshed, and seeming to bear no effects of his terrific journey, a new start was made. Part of the goods were



cached, and the spot marked by a wooden cross. The dogs that had been left behind with Eagle's Claw were harnessed to the sleighs taken along. What food remained was distributed, portion for portion, amongst the few survivors from the expedition, and then the unmarked snows were struck into.

Afar off loomed the blackness which told either of mountains or a forest, and toward this the men headed. For three days they went on in this way, and at last the black line resolved itself into mountains.

And the guide confessed that he was lost.

"The way is not there!" he said glumly.

Henry called a halt, and camp was pitched for the night. All through the night the white youth lay thinking—which way lay the river he sought?

## CHAPTER XVI

### WHEN THE WHITE MAN LED THE RED

WHEN Mostyn arose the next morning, without having once been to sleep, he had formed his plan. He remembered that through the open flap of the tepee in the Cree village he had seen the way taken by Blaine and his Indians; and it had led somewhat to the south, whereas, till then, his own party had been going due west.

"I'll take you to the yellow river!" he startled his Athabascans, no less than Eagle's Claw, by saying. "The way lies there!" and he pointed south-west.

Not a word was said in dispute, and all being ready, a fresh start was made. All that day, and the next, the sleighs were hauled over the snows, and now the mountain range lay to the right of the travellers, yet ever growing clearer in the misty air. The third day Mostyn found himself at the foot of the towering mountains, majestic in their very austerity, vast forests sweeping upwards to their very summits; here and there the sun glinted upon wide-frozen

surfaces of glaciers, and now and again—with a terrific boom and a crash that echoed across the emptiness—tremendous overhanging masses cracked, and sped down the mountain sides, sweeping away trees and rocks and leaving a wide clear trail behind.

If the way lay through those mountains, then it would be hard indeed! And although he was sure that he must be right in having made for this point, Henry was now at a loss to know which way to turn. The mountain sides were unscalable, and the first thing to be done was to find a pass of some sort; the expedition therefore headed down along the range, travelling slowly because of the roughness of the way. Moreover, it was necessary now to enter the forest at the foot of the mountains to find food, and all this meant delay.

A camp was pitched just inside, and several of the men went deep into the woods. Henry, in the van, soon came to signs which were as very gifts from the gods. Here and there tufts of hair rubbed off on tree trunks—fallen antlers and countless heart-shaped marks, barely punctuating the snow—told of deer. For hours the hunters followed that trail, and at last the forest rang with the crack of their muskets. There was no time for stalking, and not enough men to act as scouts and beaters; it was all such a matter of luck that the hunters gathered any meat into their bag. But they did so, and

then, it being too late to go back to the camp, they pitched a new one in the forest, and built themselves a fire, over which they cooked the so much wanted meat.

As usual, the freshly killed meat was hoisted up into the branches of the trees for the night, and the hunters, although it was very early and the light not all gone, prepared for sleep. It was while finishing his pipe that Henry heard a rustle among the undergrowth. He was alert on the moment, half fearing that Blaine's Crees might have succeeded in picking up the trail, and had followed right there into the forest—it was a matter of wonder to him that they had not done this! He fired straight for the spot from which the sound had come. There was a sharp yelp of pain, and he knew it was no man but an animal, drawn by the smell of the meat. The firelight showed him then a fox, white as the newly fallen snow in its winter coat, and as far as he could judge, in the fleeting glimpse he got of it, the largest he had seen for many a day.

By this time the rest of the camp was astir, but Henry quickly told them what had happened, and then, ordering the men to stay where they were, he went off after the fox—able to follow it, because, wounded as it was, it made sufficient noise to guide him. It had been a temptation too great to withstand, although he realised, after he had been trailing

it for over a mile, that it was a foolhardy thing to leave camp like that. But there it was, and he meant to have the beautiful creature, for its skin was easily worth a hundred pounds, as his practised eye had told him.

And he got it, for at last he caught a glimpse of the white coat, and, like lightning, fired and brought the animal down. When he came up with the fox, Henry realised that it was indeed a fine bag he had made.

He was in the very act of picking it up and slinging it across his shoulders when, from amongst the trees, came the sound of someone running, the soft squash of snow-shoes sounding clear in the still air. Suddenly a scream mingled with a hoarse growl, and the running ceased. Within a hundred yards, as Henry judged it, there was a fierce struggle going on, for he could hear the scuffling, the cracking of undergrowth.

"Someone chased by a bear!" was the thought that leaped to the white youth's mind, and, dropping his hard-earned trophy, he raced in the direction of the noise, his musket—which, as is the hunter's way, he had loaded immediately after firing—ready in his hand. He smashed his way through the trees, and eventually came in sight of the scene he knew he would meet. A man—an Indian—lay on the ground, and a bear—a grizzly—was on top of him, its hind legs clawing the ground, and

its fore feet just in the act of dropping to the red man's face.

Henry summed up the situation in a moment, when he saw an ugly gash down the bear's muzzle. The red man, caught up by the grizzly, had given out that dreadful scream, as he felt the brute's paws grab him, and had swung round and slashed at him with his knife, after which the two had locked in mortal combat and the man had been hurled to the ground.

Up went the white trader's musket, and, even as the bear's head lowered, and the brute growled, as though confident of victory, there was a crack, a whining growl from the grizzly as he shook his shaggy, bulky body in anger—then, ere ever he could recover from the shock, the red man's knife had thrust up and then down, and the bear screamed and toppled over on to its side.

Immediately the Indian was upon his feet, and looking about to see whence the shot had come; his eyes lighted upon Henry, who, advancing, hailed him in dialect.

"A good thrust, O brother, a good thrust that spelt the grizzly's doom!"

He said nothing about the shot which he had fired and which had really been the salvation of the red man, who now, standing with his knife dripping red, answered:

"The stranger who comes with the speaking

stick has saved the life of the Panther, when he was caught in the snare! And the Panther thanks the stranger!"

By this time the two men were almost touching each other, and suddenly the red man fell away.

"A pale-face!" he cried, and Henry saw his grip on the sinister knife tighten.

"A pale-face, but a friend!", cried Henry quickly, and he flung the musket at his feet. "See, the pale-face means not harm to his brother!"

When the Indian saw the musket go hurtling to the ground, he seemed highly relieved, and for answer, flung down his knife, then advanced again.

"The pale-face says well," he cried. "But the woods have sung with the treachery of the white man. When the Big Light went but a little while there came, from the Chief of the People of the Yellow River, a message saying: 'Behold, a pale-face, with a stick that speaks and kills without touching, has led braves to battle with my people. Fierce and bloody was the fight, and yet we got the victory and many scalps, so that the men of the pale-face were scattered to the winds, and he is captive in our lodges. Come, all of you, for the feast shall begin, and the pale-face shall know the vengeance of the red men!' Thus and thus spoke the messenger," the Indian went on, "and I

and my people shall go to the feast; there shall be a great gathering of braves!"

Henry had been a silent listener to the words of the stranger, and it had grown upon him that this pale-face of whom he spoke must be Blaine—Blaine who, with his Crees and Sioux, had fallen foul of some tribe of red men; or rather, had fallen upon them, only to find them their match, with the result that the marauding Indians under Blaine had been defeated, and the trader himself captured.

It came to Mostyn, then, that he had heard the last of his old rival, and that——

With a low cry he sprang forward—it had seemed as though a voice had called from far beyond the woods and the ice snow-fields—a voice which called upon him to "bury the hatchet."

"Tell me, O friend!" he cried to the Indian.

"Tell me where this pale-face is!"

"He is in the lodges of the People of the Yellow River!" came the staggering reply.

"Take me thither," Henry asked quickly. "I would see this pale-face!"

"If the stranger but set a foot within the village of the People of the Yellow River, he will die!" was the answer. "For they have promised on their bows and their arrow-heads that never again shall a pale-face enter, for this man came with fair words and promises, but his eyes gleamed with the light of greed when he



saw the ornaments of the squaws; and in the night he uprose with his men, and sought to kill!"

The news shocked Henry to the very core, but it was so like Blaine to do that thing, and Mostyn realised that the man's life was probably not worth a musk-rat's pelt. He must do something—something that should give Blaine a chance!

"Listen!" he cried. "That pale-face's death will bring his friends in their hundreds from across the snows, and they will take vengeance." It was a bow drawn at a venture—a great bluff, and Henry knew it, but it was worth trying. "They will come and kill your braves, and carry your squaws away with them. The pale-face must not die!"

"The stranger knows not what he says," was the answer. "The People of the Yellow River will never spare the pale-face; besides, who would dare ask them, knowing all?"

"I dare!" cried the youth. "Take me, O Panther, whose head I snatched from the closing trap!" He would play upon that now, and he saw a loosening of the tautened nerves of the Indian's face. "Take me, O Panther, to the lodges of the People of the Yellow River!"

"The pale-face who snatched the head of the Panther from the closing trap sees not whither he goes," said the Indian; "he is like

the bear who knows not that the pit is dug for him."

For a long while Henry argued, cajoled, bribed, and at last the Indian agreed—albeit, reluctantly—to conduct him on the morrow to the village of the People of the Yellow River. At Mostyn's invitation, the red man went with him to where the dead fox lay, and between them they carried it to the little camp amidst the trees. Then the Panther extended an invitation to his own camp; so all the men of Mostyn's party followed him through the forest, and in due course reached it. On the way the Indian told Henry that he had gone out early in the afternoon to hunt the bear (which had been disturbed in its winter sleep), but had had his bow snapped just when the brute charged him.

"And surely the Panther thanks his stranger brother," he ended, "for causing the stick to speak!"

When the tale was told to the Indians in the camp, there was much rejoicing, and they could not do enough for Mostyn, although some of the squaws stealthily removed their yellow ornaments, evidently fearing that this newcomer was of the same kidney as he who had caused such trouble elsewhere.

The next morning preparations were made by all the braves of the Panther for the journey over to the camp of the People of the Yellow River, and when it was explained to them that

the pale-face was going to demand the life of the captive white chief who had led the raiders, they looked at him askance and shook their heads doubtfully.

Henry himself realised that his safety hung upon a very slender thread, for these red men might—nay, must—think that he was of the party led by the captive, and he knew that the example set by one white man out in the wilds was looked upon as being the general conduct of his kind. But if Blaine could be saved, he would save him.

And so he went to the tepees of the People of the Yellow River.

His appearance outside the village was the signal for a great uproar. There seemed to be hundreds of Indians in the place, and all about were huge fires, over which meat was roasting, and in the centre of all Henry could see, tied to a stake, with fear written large upon his face, Thomas Blaine. Round him were dancing scores of maddened braves, while women and children flung burning branches at him.

"'Tis but the beginning," the Panther told Henry, who was amongst the incoming braves. "Soon, when he scarce can run, he will be made to run the gauntlet, but it is arranged that he shall not escape with his life!"

"Then lead me to the Chief of the People of the Yellow River," demanded Henry, and he burst from the ranks of the braves.

His appearance was the signal for a great uproar. Dancing ceased instantly; and braves tore down upon him. He raised his musket, and for a moment they hesitated in their wild rush, then came on again. But Henry flung his musket towards them, and it fell at their feet. As they stopped in amazement, the white youth snatched a spear from the hand of the Panther, and broke it into pieces, which he tossed into the air.

"Hear me, O Men of the Yellow River!" he shouted above the tumult of voices. "Hear me!" and the red men hushed into a silence that could have been felt.

Then down toward the white youth strode a giant of a man—befeathered, and with a huge spear grasped in his right hand and a frown upon his face.

"Who are you," he cried, "that dares to come to the lodges of the People of the Yellow River—man pale of face, and with the stick that speaks? Answer, and let not your answer be the fair words of a lying mouth!"

He shook his spear threateningly, but Henry stood firm.

Then, pointing to the fallen musket, and flinging a wampum-belt at the chief's feet—the symbol of peace—he said tensely:

"See, the stick that speaks lies where I have thrown it—thrown it in peace, even as I tossed the broken spear into the heavens, and the

wampum-belt at the chief's feet. Know you, O Chief of the People of the Yellow River, know you that I come not in war but in peace—come to bring you gifts that shall keep your squaws warm,” and he flung down his own blanket; “and these, that your squaws may see themselves,” and he scattered a dozen small mirrors from his pack. “Behold, I come to give, not to steal, and not as the man who even now shrinks with dread,” and he pointed to the figure of Blaine, shaking with fear and, no doubt, filled with pain. “I come not to steal your ornaments made of the yellow metal from the river!” Mostyn saw the chief start, as though wondering how this stranger knew so much. “I want them not, except thou givest them in fair barter. And I come not with hosts of men. See! Here are my braves,” and he beckoned out the three men who were with him. They filed out from the band behind the Panther, and arrayed themselves beside Henry, who, in a quick sharp voice, ordered them to discard their weapons, which they did. “See, here are my men, and their arms lie on the ground!”

“Fair words!” growled the chief. “But he,” pointing to Blaine, “he also came with fair words, and then—when the squaws slept, and the dogs lay still—he arose with his men and sought to kill and rob. Why should not the stranger who comes now do likewise?”

Henry realised that this was a fair question, and it was a puzzling one too. For a moment he knew not what to say; yet hesitation would be fatal, he knew. He must say something.

Inspiration came to him then.

"Listen, O Chief of the People of the Yellow River. Listen! I come to trade, 'tis true, but I come, too, to take that pale-face to the justice of his own people!" He saw Blaine shiver and quake with fright at that, wondering no doubt what Mostyn meant. "I come to take him back to the land whence he came—to the land whence the Big Light rises, and where hosts of men await his coming, and if he comes not, then will those hosts sweep through this land like the storm that roots the trees from the ground and lays the tepees on the plain. For the justice of the pale-faces must be satisfied, and cannot be thwarted."

Uprose a howl of anger from the Indians surging behind their chief, and the babel of voices was deafening. Firm as a rock Henry stood, waiting for the storm to subside. While it was at its height the red men circled round him, drawing in nearer and nearer; and he stood unarmed, with his musket too far off to reach, even had he wanted to. But he did not want to, although a cold fear gripped his heart. He realised that whatever he might do now could be of no avail to save his life, if these men were minded to take it; so, with folded arms,

he stood and stared the giant chief in the face.

Presently, the chief held up his hand, and the noise died away as suddenly as it had arisen. He swept his hand round as he turned towards the village, and a space cleared before him like magic.

"Follow me!" he shouted to Henry, and the white youth, a wonder in his mind and a queer light in his eyes, followed. To within a yard of the bound and fearful Blaine the chief strode, and then halted.

"Behold!" he cried to him, "behold this pale-face who comes from the place where the Big Light rises; know you him?"

Blaine nodded his head—he could not speak for fright.

"He comes, he says," the chief went on, "to take you to the justice of the pale-faces."

Blaine trembled. He knew not what Mostyn had in his mind, and in any case he was between two stools. If the Indians kept him, he knew death would be his lot. If Mostyn took him away, then maybe he was determined to take revenge for the evil deeds he had committed; but what Blaine could not understand was why Mostyn should have ventured here, unless it was some mad idea he had that he, and he alone, must take revenge for the deeds of wickedness and murder.

As for Henry, he did not know—had no

inkling—of what the red man was intending until the chief spoke again.

"No need to ask more," he said harshly. "I can see that this man spoke truth; for you—coward and skulking fox that you are, who would pounce upon squaws in their sleep—you fear this man and his vengeance. The People of the Yellow River know not what the justice of the pale-faces is, but since 'tis enough to make a pale-face shrink with fear, 'tis well."

He turned and called in a loud voice; in answer a lithe young warrior ran like a deer from the mass of Indians gathered around, and coming to a halt in front of the chief, waited.

"Unbind him!" the red man said. And then, turning to Henry said, "He is yours, to do with as you will!"

Neither Blaine, nor Mostyn could scarcely believe his ears; and (for different reasons) each of them was filled with varying emotions. Blaine was filled with dread lest Mostyn should haul him back to Churchill and charge him with leading Indians to war, and worse. Mostyn was filled with joy that he had been successful. Henry restrained his joy, however, but Blaine, when the warrior set him free, fell on his knees, and begged, beseeched the chief to do that with him which had been intended before this pale-face came from the forests. But the red man stood and leered at him, scorn written on his face, spurned him with his foot, and then



walked away, leaving Mostyn and his enemy alone.

"Get up, you cur," said Henry, unable to repress the scorn he felt for the other. "Get up!"

And, like a whipped cur indeed, Blaine rose to his feet, and at a sign from Mostyn, followed him to the encircling band of Indians.

"Make way for the stranger!" Henry cried, and an opening was made in the ring, through which he passed, followed still by Blaine, who marvelled at the hold this man had upon the Indians.

Straight toward his own men Henry walked, and reaching them, angrily bade them bind the prisoner. Instantly the men fell upon him, and Blaine struggled like a fiend for freedom. But, outmatched as he was, he at last had to submit to being bound by the thongs, and after that was flung heavily to the ground.

"Guard him!" ordered Henry, and then marched away to where the chief stood, still glowering. As he approached a figure slipped from the ranks of the red men and, turning, Henry saw the Panther, admiration on his face.

"The Panther comes with his brother!" was all the red man said, and thus side by side, walking in step, the two men walked to the chief.

"I thank you, O Chief of the People of the Yellow River!" said Henry. "See, the captive is a captive once more!"

No answer from the chief.

The silence was broken by the Panther.

"Hear, O Strong Arm," he said, "O Chief of Chiefs. This pale-face saved me from the bear in the woods," and he pointed toward the forest. "The Panther had his head in the jaws of the closing trap when this pale-face spoke with his lightning-stick, and behold, the Panther is here!"

The effect was magical. The frowning chief, evidently till then regretting his decision, raised his head and looked at Henry, then rose to his feet and saluted him, Indian fashion.

"Then is the pale-face welcome!" he said quietly, "for Strong Arm, Chief of the People of the Yellow River, loves the Panther as a she-bear loves her cubs!"

And the surrounding Indians took up the cry, till the snow wastes rang—and rang again—with it.

Then, stooping, Strong Arm picked up the musket which till then had been lying on the ground, and, trembling a little for fear of it, handed it back to Mostyn.

"Now I know the pale-face comes in peace," was all he said.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE RIVER OF GOLD

ALTHOUGH the feast of the People of the Yellow River was robbed, by the loss of the victim, of much of its attraction for the red men, it was proceeded with. For all it was winter the Indians seemed to have an abundance of food, and round their camp fires they sat and ate until they were too gorged to move. Before they had reached that stage, however, they had danced—not the dance that precedes the going out to war, but the dance of peace.

Mostyn sat at a fire with the chief, and together they smoked the pipe of peace. Strong Arm sang of his fighting powers, and Henry, in his turn, sang of the might of the Company of which he was a servant, told of a Great White Chief who lived far across a Big Water, on which canoes, with wide-spreading wings, raced before the wind; told of fire-sticks which spoke in the voice of thunder, and which could smash the lodges, but were used for other purposes than that.

"For the pale-faces come with peace," he sang. "And those of them who come with war are hated by their own people!"

"Then the pale-face who lies in the tepee, is he hated by his people?" the chief asked.

"Verily, 'tis so," answered Henry.

Strong Arm called to him a brave, to whom he said something that sent him running off, to return presently bringing with him a Sioux, badly wounded in the fight between Blaine's men and the warriors of the Yellow River.

"Hear what this man says!" the chief said, and then commanded the captive to speak.

His story was one that made Henry's heart beat wildly, his temples throb, and his heart beat in anguish; for the Sioux told of the midnight attack on the post down on the river.

When the Indian had finished, Strong Arm turned to Henry, but what he would have said was cut off at the birth, for the youth jumped to his feet, and, anger and contempt ringing in his voice, he called out to Eagle's Claw:

"Bring the white fox hither, brother!" and off went the Indian to the place where Blaine was held a prisoner.

He brought him—having freed his legs for the purpose—a trembling coward, into the circle of blazing fires, and led him to where Henry, glowering furiously, strode up and down before

the chief, Strong Arm, who sat immutable, and wondering what the pale-face was going to do. In his heart the Indian believed that Mostyn was about to kill the other.

Blaine was stopped in front of Mostyn, who swept round upon him with a scornful voice, which whipped the rogue like a lash.

"Blaine!" Henry said, in English this time: "Blaine, I knew you for a thieving dog. I knew you for one who would have done me, and had tried to do me, all the harm possible; but I never dreamed that you were a man to stir up strife amongst the Indians, and set them flying at each other's throats. And yet this man"—and he pointed to the captive Sioux—"this man has told the tale of those things which you did down by the river. You lost—your Indians were scattered before the wrath and courage of my Chippewayans; but the blood of Sioux and Chippewayans cries out to heaven for vengeance. Before these men, who are my friends, I tell you that you shall be hauled back to the Churchill, and your shame be made known—even your father would not wish it hidden! Tell the People of the Yellow River what the Little Peacemaker says," Mostyn cried to Eagle's Claw.

And the red man told, and a great shout uprose:

"The justice of the pale-face shall be done!"

Blaine glared balefully at Henry, and for a moment it seemed that, bound though his arms were, he would hurl himself at his foe—the foe who by some miraculous gift was able to tame the red men and bow them to his purpose.

When the noise had subsided, Henry spoke again, but this time he did not ask Eagle's Claw to interpret for him; and the red men, watching his face, and listening to the anger in his voice, needed little telling that the pale-face was angry.

"When I came, taking my life in my hand and risking the lives of all my men," he said to Blaine, "'twas because I wanted to save you from death that I knew was to be yours. I lied, Blaine—and 'tis the first lie I remember telling since my father lined me with the thong! And I lied because I had made up my mind to get you away, and give you a last chance. Not a man at Prince of Wales should have known your guilt—for I would have sealed the lips of my men—had it not been for that greatest crime of all. Those other things of evil that you did were against me. But—but to set the Indians against each other—to lead your warring men against these innocent people, too—those are things that concern not me; who am I to be your judge on those matters? Know this now: when I go back to the Churchill you go also, and the story shall be told. Take

him away again, Eagle's Claw, take him away!"

The depth of contempt in Henry's voice made Blaine, hardened rogue that he had become, wince, and, without a word, he turned and followed the Indian.

After that the gluttonous feast went on, but in the course of it Henry, by judicious questioning, had managed to get the chief to tell him that the yellow metal of which the numerous ornaments adorning the red men were made was to be found in the river that lay but a little way from the site of the camp.

"The pale-face would like to see the Yellow River," was all that Henry said.

The chief looked at him shrewdly, and for a moment Henry feared that he had struck a false note, made a false move. He waited anxiously for the old man to speak.

"Were it not that the pale-face comes with few men—were it not that the red man thinks he reads his heart aright—that were the request of a fool!"

He paused, but there was nothing sinister in it to Henry, and he breathed again with relief.

"The pale-face who trembles at the words of my brother," Strong Arm went on, "came with fair words, but crafty; he asked not to see the Yellow River, and for the silence of him seemed not even to see the yellow things. But my

brother comes with the words of truth on his lips, and the People of the Yellow River fear him not. When the Big Light comes again we will lead him to that which he desires to see."

"I thank you, O Chief of the People of the Yellow River," said Henry. "I covet not your ornaments, nor the trinkets of your squaws, for have not the pale-faces abundance of them? Behold; lend me but a few men, and my brother"—he indicated Eagle's Claw—"will lead them to my sleighs, and they shall bring back the gifts that the pale-face has brought with him."

"It is well," said the chief.

Next morning, with a dozen braves, Eagle's Claw sallied forth, threaded his way through the forest and out into the snows again, picked up the camp which had been left earlier on the day when the hunters went for food, sent back the sleigh with its load, and then went on farther—in this exceeding the orders of Mostyn—and found the cached goods, with which he and the rest of the red men set off for the village.

Meanwhile, leaving Blaine still bound and guarded in a tepee, Henry, together with Strong Arm, went to the Yellow River.

The water was frozen, but the chief set dozens of his men to work to break up the ice, and, looking down into the clear depths of the river,



Henry saw a sight that made him glad—the sandy bed of the river glittered with gold. For a while he stood silent, looking at the huge fortune before him, and in his mind's eye he saw his old father, his trading and trapping days ended, back in the dear old land, comfortable after a life of strenuous labour and danger.

"The pale-face has seen!"

It was the chief speaking, and Henry came back to realities at the sound of his voice.

"Aye, verily the pale-face has seen!" he cried. "And he fain would take some of the dirt from the river-bed!"

"And, like wolves to the fresh killed meat, his brothers will cross the white plains, and my people know their wrath!" shouted the chief.

Henry knew what he was thinking of, knew that he was seeing in his mind's eye men such as Blaine, whose cupidity would make them stop at nothing to reap this harvest of gold. And he could not for a moment bring himself to speak, for he did not know what to say.

"Hear me," he cried at last, "and believe the word of a pale-face who loves his red brothers! Grant me the warmth of your fires, the shelter of your lodges, till the great thaw comes and the river runs free again; grant me but as much of the yellow dirt as I can carry away on my sleigh, and, by the Good Spirit who makes the

woods to teem with food and the rivers leap with fish, no man of my people shall know whence it came—if Strong Arm desires it so. I have spoken!”

For some time the old chief stood, staring straight into the face of Mostyn, who not for a moment flinched from his gaze, nor tried in any way to argue or persuade him; but, deep in his heart, the youth was wondering whether, after all, the great journey across the unknown land, the perils, the risks, the hunger and fatigue, were to be in vain; for he was resolved that if the chief said no he would not take with him one grain of gold. But it was hard, very hard, not to wish that the answer should be yes, for Mostyn, after all, was but a man who knew what the wealth that lay before him could do for him and his father.

And the chief was thinking of the fearlessness of this youth who came with a handful of men into a country where the people could but be enemies and hostile to him; thinking, too, of his courageous bearing, his so evident honesty of purpose, and sense of justice; and the red man's heart softened towards him.

“The pale-face has spoken,” he said, “but the Chief of the People of the Yellow River is afraid still, and his answer must wait.”

With that Henry had to be content. He did not attempt to argue, did not show a sign of disappointment, neither of fear, although he

was aware that if the answer of the chief should be no, he stood little chance of ever getting away from the river which had lured him over so many miles.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SAVIOUR OF THE PEOPLE OF THE YELLOW RIVER

FOR two or three days Henry Mostyn remained the honoured guest of the Indians, but never once did he mention the gold, and he never seemed to take notice of the profusion of golden ornaments which was in the village. The relay sent back by Eagle's Claw with the sleigh arrived, and Mostyn understood why the Indian was not with them. Fortunately, the one sleigh was the largest, and held a goodly store of merchandise. Henry opened the bales in the presence of the chief, and the finest things—the gaudiest blankets, the longest, keenest knives, and the brightest kettles—were given to the chief; while the largest mirrors and the prettiest beads were laid aside for his squaws.

“These,” he said to the chief, “are the gifts of the pale-face to his friend, and the squaws of his friend.”

The old chief took them, and in return placed

at Henry's feet a fine, well-beaten gold pot, while the women slipped bangles from their wrists and ankles and gave them to him.

Henry moved to the sleigh again, and from beneath a pile of bales drew forth a musket, at the sight of which the chief's eyes gleamed covetously. Henry saw the gleam in them, but appeared not to do so. For a moment or two he handled the musket, as though weighing up in his mind whether he should give it to the chief, and then made as though to put it back whence he had taken it. But, impetuously, he stepped forward, the musket in hand.

"See, O Strong Arm, the pale-face gives unto his friend the fire-stick!" and he offered it to the chief.

That worthy, however, was terribly afraid of it. He had seen the execution that Blaine's musket had made upon his people, and one, which had been dropped by a fallen Sioux—of whom but about half a dozen were armed—had been picked up by one of his braves, and that brave had died; for the fire-stick had suddenly exploded and blown half his face away. Therefore the chief was very nervous, and withdrew sharply the hand which he had thrust out to take it.

"See," cried Henry, "it kills not except its holder wills!" and he pulled back the lock, and, as the weapon was not loaded, nothing happened except the dull thump of the hammer.

This seemed to reassure the old man, who took the musket, albeit somewhat gingerly.

"'Twill give the Chief of Chiefs power over his enemies," said Henry, "for the pale-face will show him how to make the fire come."

"It is well, then," said the chief—dubiously, however; but he took good care that none but himself should touch the precious thing which had been given him.

All that day, and the next, Henry spent in teaching the chief the way to use the musket; and when the old man realised that it was not so dangerous as it looked, he had brought to him the muskets which the defeated Sioux had left behind them, and these he gave to his favourite sons, whom Henry had also to instruct.

It was towards the evening of that day that, with loud shouts, there came running into the village, dragging behind them the sleigh which Henry had cached far off in the snows beyond the forest, Eagle's Claw and the men he had taken with him. They halloaed with panting throats, and when, at last, they staggered into the village they could scarcely speak. But when they did speak, it was a tale of woe they had to tell.

"Behold, O Chief of Chiefs!" one of the Indians cried. "Behold, the men of the forest dance the war-dance; their heads are covered with feathers, their bows are taut and their arrows sharpened. They come like the wind."

And then, hurriedly, he told of how they had seen a rival tribe in the forest, all ready for war, marching towards the village of the People of the Yellow River.

Scarcely waiting for them to finish, Strong Arm issued orders which sent his braves into their tepees, to emerge presently painted and befeathered for war, with their bows and arrows and spears ready. Although he, too, carried the weapons of his people, the chief also had with him the musket, and his sons had theirs as well.

"The pale-face fights with us!" the chief said, and Henry knew by the tone in his voice that it was impossible to draw back.

"The pale-face likes not war," he said simply, "but because the squaws and the lodges of his friend are in danger, then will he fight to defend them."

The speech pleased the old man, who, of course, had realised that the white youth and his few red companions, armed as they were with fire-sticks, would prove a valuable addition to his forces. He was more pleased than ever when Henry suggested that, instead of waiting for the attackers to fall upon the camp, they should go forth to give battle far away from the tepees.

"It is wisely spoken," said the chief, and, with Henry and those armed with muskets in the van, the braves of the Yellow River moved

out of the village—a certain number, of course, being left to defend it in case of accidents.

Mostyn, as he went with them, realised that there was likely to be red work that evening, and he cudgelled his brains to find a way out. He knew, of course, that it was useless to hope that the battle might be averted, and yet he felt that somehow he ought to try to minimise the horror of it.

Eagle's Claw, marching by his side, knew what his master was thinking about, and said:

"The Little Peacemaker is thinking of peace?"

"Aye," said Henry, "but how can there be peace?"

"Cannot the wisdom of the Little Peacemaker find a way?" the red man asked simply, as though he believed that the white youth must surely be able to work this miracle, even as he had worked others. "Was it not he who put the ring of fire round that——"

There was no need for Eagle's Claw to say any more; like a flash it came to Henry that the ruse which he had adopted to hold off the Indians who had attacked the post on the Churchill River was one that might be used in the circumstances with which he was faced.

He turned to Strong Arm, who, of course, had not known what the red man and the pale-face had been saying, and was curious.

"The pale-face knows best how to defeat



the enemies of the People of the Yellow River," Henry said quickly. "If his friend will but return to the village, though 'tis true the pale-face thought otherwise before, then shall the enemy be driven off."

"Tell me more, O brother!" the chief asked eagerly. "What is the way?"

"It is the way of the pale-faces," said Henry. "Will the Chief of Chiefs trust his brother?"

"It is so," was the answer, and in a few moments the braves were sweeping back over the snows towards the village, where, on their appearance, a great cry went up, those who had been left behind thinking that they had been driven back soon after starting out.

Their fears were allayed, however, when Henry told them that he had come back to save their village. Then, without loss of time, he and Eagle's Claw and the Athabascans began to lay all round the village, as far as the powder could be spared—and it was very little, as Henry uneasily realised—long rows of powder in birch-bark holders, with big gaps between to economise. And when this was done Henry sent out scouts, who were to come back in relays with news of the approaching enemies.

By the time the last relay came in it was very dark, and the report told that the attacking party—who numbered some two hundred—were

within a quarter of a mile of the village, approaching with all the cunning of the red man.

"Keep within the shelter of your tepees!" Henry told the Indians, and they obeyed, leaving Mostyn, Eagle's Claw, and the Athabascans lying full length on the ground, each at the end of a trail of gunpowder.

Deathly silence reigned in the camp, the fires of which had been put out on Henry's instructions. Mostyn, besides his one little surprise, had prepared another; into a couple of the smallest kettles he possessed, he had pressed some powder, to which was attached a fuse; the spouts he had crammed tightly with powder made wet, and giving one to Eagle's Claw told him what to do with it.

The silence was awful; the anxiety of the white youth was great; it was uncanny, this waiting in a noiseless camp, with armed men, fierce and bloodthirsty, creeping through the night, and he realised that his popularity, so newly won, with the People of the Yellow River depended upon the success of his ruse.

At last the moment came. There was a slight movement out there in the darkness, and Henry knew that it was time to act. He touched off his fuse with the pipe which he had ready for the purpose, there was a spurting spluttering, and a line of fire leaped up, followed almost immediately afterwards by another, as

Eagle's Claw touched off his; and then the whole camp seemed to be ringed by a line of fire as the Athabascans did the same.

Simultaneously with Eagle's Claw touching off his fuse, Henry leaped to his feet, the fuse of his kettle alight. He held it in his left hand, while his right held his musket, which he pointed to the ground. He fired the musket, and the crack of it awoke the echoes, then he flung the kettle far out from the camp. Even when it was at the height of the throw, it flashed, and then dropped to earth like a ball of fire. Eagle's Claw, from another point, followed the same tactics as his master, and suddenly, instead of a shower of arrows coming singing into the camp, there arose a terrific howling and yelling; and, in the light of the falling kettles, Henry saw black forms racing away.

This was the moment for which he had waited. He had told the chief that on no account, when an uproar arose, were his people to come out; the fight was to be left to him, and Strong Arm had thought that this pale-face must indeed be a medicine man to dream of meeting so many foes alone.

Down at his side was an old lanthorn, the kind which was used in the posts of the traders; it was alight and shielded, but Henry withdrew the shield, and with the lanthorn hanging round his neck, the smoke of the tallow candle almost choking him, he raced towards the fleeing

figures, shouting madly—he was bent on scaring the enemy somehow.

Like the wind he went, and not even the fear-helped feet of the fleeing foes could prevent him catching up with the hindmost of them; his purpose was to seize one of these men and to bring him into the camp, there to turn him into an emissary of peace.

Running until he was almost touching one of the fleeing figures, he reached out his hand, as he went alongside, and circled his arm round the throat of the man. A horrible yell of fear came from the man's lips, and he was so scared that he did not struggle, but dropped to the ground. Instantly Henry and Eagle's Claw—who had followed the white youth's instructions to the letter and had been pelting along behind him—grabbed the Indian, and, lifting him bodily, carried him, an almost lifeless form, into the camp. Straight to the tepee of Strong Arm he was borne, the while that the Athabascans and Eagle's Claw, who returned to them, were preparing another train in case it should be needed.

"Quickly!" cried Henry, "speak to this man what I say!" and the chief nodded, with a look of wonder in his eyes.

"Tell him," Mostyn went on, "tell him that the People of the Yellow River have a fighter of their battles amongst them—a fighter who comes from the land where the Big Light rises."

He speaks, and the fire races along the ground!  
Speaks again, and the very heavens rain fire!  
Speaks yet again, and the clouds crash as with  
thunder!"

He paused, and Strong Arm interpreted what the white man had said—the captive, held fast by a couple of braves, looking at him with terror-filled eyes. It was evident that he was a person of some importance, by the feathers on his head; but for all that he was as a whimpering child in the presence of the devil who had caught him in the darkness.

"Tell him, too," went on Henry, "that the bringer of fire can kill with the fire he brings. See!" and he raised his musket and promptly shot a mongrel that was crouching in the corner.

The crack of the firearm made the captive leap, and he began to struggle, but was unable to free himself, so he stood, looking with fear upon the dog, now lying still upon the ground.

"Tell him that even as this dog has died, so shall the foes of the People of the Yellow River die, if they attack the camp. But tell him also that the bringer of fire is the bringer of peace and good things to those who will be friends, and that he would be friends with those who sought to kill. Send him away!"

Instantly the old chief shouted an order, the man's arms were freed, and, with one scared look at the dead dog and another at Henry,

he turned and dashed out of the tepee, and no man tried to stop him.

"What is it that the pale-face has done?" Strong Arm asked when the captive had gone. "Why is it that my braves stand idle here, while the enemy lurks without? Tell me, O brother!"

"The pale-face has driven away the foes of the People of the Yellow River," said Henry, but he was not a little anxious, despite his brave words, lest the scared foes should gather courage and return. Would that captive, whom he had set free, tell all that he had heard and seen? And, if so, what would the effect be? Mostyn did not know, but there was a great hope in his heart.

"The braves of Strong Arm stand idle because there are no foes to fight. The pale-face sees the foes coming in to beg for peace."

It was a bold prophecy, but he was staking all upon this, and he knew that he must take risks, trusting that if things did not turn out as he had said, then his muskets would bring victory where bluff had not.

All that night the chief and his braves remained awake, standing to their arms, for they could not believe that this thing could be so. Henry also remained on the alert, anxiety tearing at him; but, as the hours dragged on,

and no other attack was made, he began to believe that his ruse had succeeded.

It was left to the morning for his belief to be confirmed; for when the fingers of the misty dawn crept up into the east, there he saw coming towards the camp the figure of an Indian, then another, and another; and the first one he recognised, when it drew near enough, as that of the man he had caught in the night. And each of those men bore in his hands the pieces of a broken spear—it was the symbol of peace.

Henry, musket and spear in hand, went out to meet them, accompanied by Strong Arm.

"See, it is peace," Henry said, and he flung his musket and the shattered spear to the ground.

Rather dubiously Strong Arm did the same, and then stood with Mostyn and awaited the approach of the three foes.

"We come, O Chief of Chiefs," cried one of the new-comers, "to offer peace!"

"It is well," grunted Strong Arm.

"Can men fight against devils who make the earth leap fire, and the heavens rain it?" said the stranger. "Surely the People of the Yellow River are too powerful for any foes to overcome!"

"Why came you then like wolves in the night?" Strong Arm asked sternly.

"We came, O Chief of Chiefs," was the

answer, "because 'twas told us by strangers that a man—a pale-face—had come to the People of the Yellow River, who had gifts for our squaws, and arms for us that would give us victory in battle and the chase; and that the People of the Yellow River had held him captive, keeping his merchandise for themselves. Thus we came that we might have of those gifts."

"What does he say?" Henry asked Strong Arm, for the dialect was one that he did not understand.

The chief told him, and Henry realised that in all probability some of the Sioux who had accompanied Blaine had met these Indians and told them a highly coloured story of the beneficence of Blaine and the cupidity of the People of the Yellow River. Prompted by Mostyn, the chief asked a number of questions, the answers to which made Henry quite positive that his surmise was correct.

"Is this the pale-face?" the chief of the foes asked.

"Nay," answered Strong Arm. "This is not the man of whom you were told," and then he recited the story of Blaine's coming and his cowardly attack, and how that this pale-face who stood there, weaponless, had come and demanded the captive, that the justice of the pale-faces might be meted out to him.

"This pale-face is my brother," cried Strong



Arm, pointing to Mostyn, "and he comes to bring peace; but he comes, too, to bring death to those who are foes to the People of the Yellow River. He can bring the fire from earth and sky, and the thunder from the clouds. Death speaks in the stick that he has flung at your feet."

"Tell them that I would see them not foes but friends of the People of the Yellow River," said Henry, and the chief obeyed.

"Go tell your people!" Henry said, and Strong Arm interpreted. "Go tell them this, and say that the peace the pale-face brings is better than war!"

After a few minutes' further discussion the three red men retraced their steps and went into the forest, to return after about half an hour, bringing with them a whole band of braves, every one of them weaponless.

"It is peace!" they cried, and the call was echoed by the People of the Yellow River, as they saw their chief returning with the unarmed men who, but a few hours before, had been coming to attack them.

"The pale-face is the Saviour of the People of the Yellow River," they sang. "He is the bringer of peace to peoples who have been foes these many moons."

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE WHITE MAN'S CREDIT

UNTIL the river thawed and the snow melted under the ever-increasing heat of the sun, Henry Mostyn remained with the People of the Yellow River, and the time was filled with much work. The peace which he had brought about between these Indians and their old enemies was but a first step in a great work that he did amongst the various tribes in the country at the foot of the great mountains. Accompanied by Strong Arm, he went from camp to camp, carrying presents of all kinds. To make them last as long as possible, he had prevailed upon the chief to allow him to borrow back the gifts which he had given him.

"Lend to your brother," he had said, "those gifts which he has given you, for with them he will buy a greater gift than all. He will buy peace. And when the great thaw comes, and the pale-face can go back across the plains, he will bring back with him sleigh on sleigh laden with gifts for the People of the Yellow River."

And Strong Arm gave up everything, with

the exception of the muskets. He insisted that no muskets should be given to the other tribes—a condition with which Henry immediately fell in. Thus it was that for miles around, Indians who, till then, had always been at bitter enmity with one another, were brought together in peace. No longer did the red men sleep with their arms at their sides, ready to spring up to beat off any attack. Henry Mostyn, with all the rough eloquence which was his, and all the magnetism of his personality, his tact, his generosity, succeeded in welding these diverse elements into one great whole, owing allegiance to the Chief of the Yellow People.

“The pale-face is like the tamer of the wild horse,” the chief said one day, as they stood beside the great rushing river—the great, majestic, awe-inspiring forest towering high upon the mountains. “He makes the wolves lie down with the deer, and the panther with the child. And it is good! They are strange things that he tells us out of the Book he loves, but they are wonderful things. The Jesus of the pale-face—his Great Spirit—is good, and Strong Arm and his people must know more about him.”

Henry, looking at the old man, who, he could see, hardly restrained his emotion, felt his heart singing for joy; for he could not hide from himself, even had he wished to, that

these past months had been wonderful ones. He was glad—glad, till he wanted to fling up his fur cap into the air and jump with joy—that he had been able to do all this for these ignorant men of the wilds. As best he knew how, he had told them of the Great God he worshipped, and his teaching—crude though it was—had revealed a new way of life to the red men.

Instinctively he wondered what Blaine would have said had he heard the words of the old chief. During all this time Blaine had been held a prisoner. Henry had often been tempted to release him, but, because he knew the black heart of his foe, he dared not, for the sake of the work he had in hand. It might easily be that, if Blaine were free, he might manage by some means or other to sow discord where peace had been fashioned, and Henry could not risk that. He realised that apart from all the good that might come to the red men by this new friendliness—this new, cleaner way of living—the result to the Company would be incalculable. He could go back to the Churchill and tell the traders there—tell the grim old Governor—that a great new field had been opened, if only the traders would play fairly and would go in peace and friendliness. For Henry had seen, during those winter months, huge sources of supply for pelts. The tribes in the country were adepts

at trapping, and he knew that when he went back he would take the finest consignment of furs that had ever been taken to the Fort.

So he had kept Blaine a prisoner, although he had done everything possible to make his captivity easy. Blaine had been allowed to go out, under the guard of Eagle's Claw and one or other of the Athabascans; and somehow Henry seemed to have noticed a chastened appearance in the man, and a great longing came to Mostyn that Blaine might perhaps turn over a new leaf. There was, however, the question that had to be settled of his part in causing strife amongst the Indians, and Henry did not know how to cope with that. It must be left for other days.

Standing there by the river, down which the ice blocks were tumbling and crashing into each other, Henry turned to the chief after a while of silent thought, and said:

"The pale-face takes no credit to himself. Has not Strong Arm himself worked with him in all this, and has not his heart been in the work of peace? Verily, the Strong Arm has done this thing, for he wanted to know—was hungry to know—all about the God of the Pale-face and the Peace he makes all people to dwell in."

The old man shrugged his shoulders (as much as to say that this was all nonsense to

suppose that he had had anything to do with the great work), but Henry could see that he was pleased with the compliment.

"To-morrow," Strong Arm said suddenly, "to-morrow I take my brother down the river to where he shall see the yellow dirt like grass upon the plains!"

And, sure enough, the following day, embarking in a canoe with Mostyn, the chief was paddled down stream, the skilful red men piloting the craft in and out amongst the ice blocks in a way that made Henry envy them, practised voyageur that he was. For several miles the canoe went; and on the bank men raced, keeping it company.

Turning suddenly to see how far off the runners had dropped, when the paddlers put on a spurt for the fun of it, Henry saw something that almost made his heart stand still. Coming down the river, at an amazing pace, was a gigantic ice block, which was sweeping everything else before it; fast as the canoe was being paddled, the ice seemed to travel quicker, and Henry realised that it would surely catch up with them and crash them to pieces.

"Look out!" he cried in English, forgetting himself for the moment.

His shout, however, made the paddlers turn quickly, and they seemed to take fright. They paddled furiously, but their very anxiety foiled them in their purpose. And they did not see

that they were heading the canoe straight for a passage-way between two large chunks of ice, which were gradually closing in.

Henry saw, however, but the momentum of the canoe was such that it was impossible to pull it up, and with a rending crash the craft went into the ice as he shouted to the paddlers to ease up and turn. Broadside on, the canoe struck and shivered, and then shattered itself to pieces on the unyielding ice. Every man was flung out into the water, and Henry, coming up after a while, saw the paddlers making pell-mell for the bank, in the endeavour to escape that charging ice block. And Strong Arm, old man that he was, was manfully trying to do the same, but was making little progress.

It was easy to see that he would be smashed to pieces unless assistance came to him, and Henry swept through the water toward him. Cumbered as he was with his thick heavy clothes, the youth could not swim very quickly, but he swam quicker than the chief, and caught him up, grabbed him, and telling him to hold on, helped him toward the bank, where scores of red men stood as though petrified at the plight of their chief. Henry could hear the pounding of the block as it crashed into other blocks, and he turned to see just where it was. It seemed to be but a dozen yards away, and they were directly in its path. With a mighty effort he drew the chief onward, and still

onward, and, his head swimming, his eyes bleared, he gave a final spurt, and, as the ice block went sweeping past, he grabbed a jutting rock just above the surface of the water, and knew that he was at the bank.

Willing hands soon got them both out, and Henry, exhausted by his efforts, sagged. When he came round he was lying in the tepee of Strong Arm, who was bending over him with an anxious look on his face.

"It is good!" the old man said when he saw Henry's eyes open. "I thought that my friend had gone to the happy hunting grounds!"

"Not yet!" said Henry with a smile, and he got upon his feet, feeling stiff and sore all over. "Not yet, and——"

"The pale-face has saved the life of Strong Arm," said the red man, gratefully. "Come!" and taking his hand he led Henry out of the tepee, out of the camp, and toward the river from which they had both been saved in the nick of time. The chief pointed to the river-bed, where the glitter of gold shone up through the pure clear water. "See, there is the yellow dirt," the old man said. "The pale-face may take that which he wants!"

Till that moment, since the day they had first stood together and looked at the gold in the river-bed, not a word had been said between these two regarding it; and Mostyn had been



content to wait for the chief to mention the matter again, if even he ever did. Despite all the disappointment it would have been to return without any of the gold, Henry was satisfied, more than satisfied, with the prospects of his journey—it would prove a very profitable one, he had no doubt at all.

Now he looked up at the old chief with gratitude in his eyes.

"I thank you, O Chief of Chiefs," he said.

"I thank my friend."

## CHAPTER XX

### TIES THAT BIND

As soon as the river was free enough of ice, Strong Arm made his people obtain from the river bed the gold that he had promised Mostyn; and the white youth, at the end of about a month, found himself the possessor of such an amount of gold as he had never dreamed of.

It was done up in skin bags, and a sleigh loaded with it, ready to be taken across the wild plains when the trader returned. Meanwhile Henry had been busy.

"Hear me, O Strong Arm," he said to the chief. "I came to this your country to bring peace and trade. I have brought peace, but I can bring you no trade, for all those gifts which I carried with me are gone! And yet I would that I could take with me, not merely the gold that comes from the great river, but the pelts of the beaver and the fox, the raccoon and the musquash. All these are the things that my masters ask of me. But, since my sleighs are empty, I will go empty away this time, but again

I shall return, and with me will come sleigh on sleigh of fire-sticks and knives and——”

“It is good,” said Strong Arm gravely. “When the snows cover the plains, and the ice the rivers, the Little Peacemaker will come again. I know that. But why should my brother go empty away this time? Is not the word of the Little Peacemaker as good to his brother as the gifts he has but cannot give yet? Go you, O brother, amongst my people, buy of them what you will—and when you come again bring the price! I have spoken!”

If the chief had spoken, Henry did not know how to speak—his heart was too full. This was something that he had not dreamed of. It was a stupendous thing that he, a stranger—a man of different colour, who had come alone into the country of these red men, with but few goods—should have won such a place in their hearts that they would trust him with the fruits of their labours, and trust him to bring them at some other time the price of them!

But it was so, and the truth wellnigh staggered him. And he knew that this great thing that had happened was the result of the teaching of Christianity.

“Thank you, O brother,” he said very quietly. “But where is the use of my buying furs if I have not the canoes to carry them away? I came with many men, but they were killed by my foe. How then can these few

men paddle canoes sufficient to carry the furs that my brother offers?"

"If I trust you with the furs of my people, think you that I cannot trust you with my people too? Go, buy, and that which you buy shall be taken by my people to that place where your lodge is built!"

So, his heart overflowing with gratitude, Henry caused messengers to be sent to the people round about, and they came up the river and across the plains, a great gathering of them—with pelts of every kind, which they laid at the feet of the white man, content to leave them with him, knowing that they would obtain the price of them from the lodge on the far-off river.

It was another three weeks before the trading was over, and when it was Henry found that he had scores of canoes laden with pelts to the very gunwales. And the day came when he must leave in order to reach the river—where the Lynx and Horne waited—in time to get back to the Fort for the ships awaiting to take the skins to England.

"He went to the tepee of Strong Arm to say good-bye, and started back with astonishment, for the old man greeted him with—

"My brother says not farewell yet, for I come with him to that lodge across the plains!"

This was something that Henry had never

expected, but he was used to having things sprung on him by now, and he accepted the chief's decision calmly.

Together they went into a canoe, paddled by strong arms; Eagle's Claw was placed in charge of Blaine, whose face was a picture when he saw what sort of a fleet of canoes, each one laden to the gunwales, Mostyn had with him.

With shouts of delight the paddlers of the scores of craft began to sweep their canoes through the water, followed for a long distance by runners on the bank.

So began a great and long journey back to the river; along the great Yellow River, skirting the foot of the mountains they went. At places, dreadful portages had to be made, but the Indians carried the canoes without a murmur, although they were heavy and cumbersome, and then into the water again for many, many miles to take to the plains when there were no connecting rivers. For scores of miles—nay, hundreds—the canoes were carried, and every night the Indians slept like dead men. The journey took weeks, but it was a different journey from that which Henry had made, when the snow lay hard upon the ground and food was scarce. For now there was plenty of food, and there were plenty of men to carry the canoes.

At last, far off in the distance, Henry saw the colours of the Hudson Bay Company

waving in the breeze above his post on the river.

"See!" he cried to the old chief, who had showed amazing staying powers for all his age. "See, the lodge of the Little Peacemaker!"

"It is well," said Strong Arm, but it was clear he was filled with excitement and curiosity to see what the pale-face's lodge might be like.

Together he and Henry, with Blacknose beside them in the canoe, went on in advance of the rest of the fleet, and when they were near enough, Henry fired his musket, and before the echoes had died down, scores of figures were lining the wooden stockade; presently they leaped over and came running along the river, shouting with glee and giving Henry Mostyn a welcome that made the old chief realise what a hold this young pale-face had over men.

"It is like the return of a brave from the battle!" he said, "with fresh scalps to hang in the lodges!"

Chippewayans flung themselves into the river and swam out to the canoe, which they seized and dragged in to the bank, where Henry landed, to be received by the Lynx and Horne.

"Welcome back, O Little Peacemaker!" cried the Lynx. "Had you not come ere the moon was past, I and my people were coming out to find you!"

"No need for that, brother," said Henry, laughing. "See, I bring new friends! Behold, Strong Arm, Chief of the People of the Yellow River!"

Very solemnly the Lynx and Strong Arm greeted each other; they seemed to realise that it was a serious occasion, this bringing together of tribes in the persons of their chiefs, and together the red men and the white moved up to the post, and presently the whole string of canoes had run ashore.

A great feast was held which lasted long into the night, and it was a well-fed company of Indians that went to sleep in the confines of the stockade.

"Well," Henry asked Horne next morning, "how is trade? It would seem by the look of the store houses that all the Indians in the West have been here!"

"Not quite all," answered Horne half seriously, "but, Mostyn, you never saw such crowds as came! You see, that devil Blaine—you've a story to tell, eh?—led hundreds of Indians against us and——"

"I've heard all about it, or pretty well all," Henry said, "but go on, Horne. Let's hear what you've got to say about it."

Horne told his story, and finished up by saying that the result of the affair was that the Indians who had been captured, and then

released, had spread the news far and wide that the pale-face had no other intentions than to trade peacefully, with the result that when spring arrived hundreds of the red men had come down the river and across the plains, bringing loads of fine pelts.

The Lynx sat beside Henry while Horne was recounting the story, and the trader turned to him and said:

"What think you of it all?"

The Chippewayan shrugged his shoulders and was silent a while; then he got upon his feet and said:

"Little Peacemaker, the son of Black Bear thinks it is well! This only would he say: what shall be done with the white traitor?"

Mostyn had known that this was coming, and was ready for it.

"He goes with us to the far-off lodge of the pale-faces, and there shall the justice of the white men be meted out to him. The Little Peacemaker has spoken!"

The determination that rang in his voice seemed to satisfy both the Lynx and Strong Arm, for they nodded their heads in approval.

"Tell me, Horne," Henry asked presently, "what stores have we left? I am in debt to the People of the Yellow River! Those canoes of pelts are here on credit; not a blanket, not a knife had I left to pay for them, and yet they let them be brought, because I



vowed that the price should be paid. Is there enough?"

"I don't know yet," was the reply, "but we'll take stock and see."

So, with the old chief and the Lynx as interested spectators, Henry and his white comrade went to the hut which still contained trade goods, and made an inventory.

"We're about the price of five hundred pelts short!" was the verdict given by Henry when the work was done. He turned to the chief and told him, but the old man simply shook his shoulders and said:

"What matters it? Will not the Little Peacemaker come again? And will that not be time enough for the People of the Yellow River? It is good! For is not the Little Peacemaker my brother?"

"He is!" Henry replied, impulsively gripping the Indian's hand in the white man's fashion.

For some time the old man looked at him, as though thinking of something of great importance. Presently he turned away, and in a loud voice called together all his men who had come with him across the boundless stretch of country.

"Go, hunt!" he cried. "Bring meat in plenty for the Chief of the People of the Yellow River gives a feast."

Obedient to his very word, the Indians

gathered their weapons and went into the neighbouring forest.

"What means my brother?" Henry demanded, filled with curiosity at this outburst.

"He means, O pale-face, that there is a great longing in his heart to have you for a brother."

"But am I not your brother?" exclaimed Henry.

"Let the Little Peacemaker wait!" was all the Indian vouchsafed to say; but the next night, when the braves had returned, a great feast was prepared to which all the Chippewans and the few Athabascans were invited, as well as Henry and Horne.

"Bring that white traitor, and let him watch, with wonder in his heart!" Strong Arm commanded.

So Blaine, who had been kept confined in one of the huts, except for an occasional stroll about the stockade, was fetched out and made to sit, apart from the other men, and look on at a ceremony that literally made him gasp.

A great fire was burning in the centre of the stockade, and small ones outside, to accommodate the many people who could not find room within, and on each fire whole carcasses were roasting. Henry was as much in the dark as everyone else as to what was in the chief's mind, but presently he was enlightened. The old chief got upon his feet before the feasting

began, and cried with a loud voice. Instantly there was silence, and he began:

"Hear you, O friends, and strangers who are now friends," he said. "Moons ago the pale-face chief came across the snows to the land of the People of the Yellow River; at first my people thought he came to bring death and woe, and I, their chief, had it in my mind that he should die. But the pale-face is wise and good, and I—I read his heart, called him brother, took him into my lodge. To near and far he went with the words of wisdom on his lips—words which he tells us are the words of the Great Spirit. And now, in the land where there once were war and bitterness, there is peace among the peoples. Hear, then! I, Chief of the People of the Yellow River, take him for my blood-brother!"

At the words there rose up a mighty shout; the Indians seemed to go mad with joy over something that for the moment Henry could not realise. Then, like a flash, it came to him; he had heard from his father of the great rite of the red men whereby certain of the Indians vowed eternal friendship and peace. It was the rite of blood-brotherhood, and he did not remember hearing of any white man who had been initiated into it.

He was literally stunned, for he knew that once admitted into blood-brotherhood he could do with these red men what he liked. He



could go amongst them safe from attack, and the prospect seemed almost too good to be true.

"Is the pale-face willing to become blood-brother of Strong Arm, Chief of the People of the Yellow River?" the chief turned and asked.

At that Henry jumped to his feet.

"Listen, O Great Chief," he cried. "The pale-face is willing—he longs to become your blood-brother! But one thing he would ask: cannot these my Chippewayans—and these my, Athabascans, too—become blood-brothers with the People of the Yellow River?"

He had seen in this a great opportunity to weld the friendship between the peoples he had brought together, and it was an opportunity not to be missed.

"It is good!" answered the chief, as he opened a vein in his right arm, handing Henry the knife afterwards, and signing him to do the same.

Mostyn obeyed. The flowing blood was caught in a cup held by a notable brave, and then the chief drank from it and Henry Mostyn did the same, although in his heart he revolted against what he considered was a hideous custom, and yet he knew that it was to result in great good being brought to these ignorant red men.

"Behold, my brother!" cried the Strong Arm then, and again that great shout arose.

Followed the rite between the Lynx and the old chief, and then between the latter and the chief man of the Athabascans, and between them and the Lynx.

"It is peace for all the moons to come!" cried the old man then, and his emotion was beautiful to watch. "Truly, brother, is your name the Little Peacemaker!"

Moved more than he could tell, Henry Mostyn turned and faced the chief, and swept out his hands towards the West where, miles off, rushed the great river which he had known as the Yellow River.

"And for ever shall that mighty river be called the Peace River!" he cried. "And men—white men and red men—shall tell of the day when a man from the East met the red men of the West, and brought them peace upon its banks!"

Then, utterly overcome by his emotion, Mostyn broke down, and wept like any babe.

Sitting between his two guards, Tom Blaine had been a spectator of the awe-inspiring ceremony, and as the full realisation of what it meant came to him, it seemed to him that something snapped in his brain. With a sharp cry, as of pain, he leaped to his feet, and, before ever his guards could spring up and seize him, he had darted away, and raced like the wind to the spot where Henry Mostyn stood, weeping for very joy.

"Mostyn!" he cried, and at the sound of his voice Henry pulled himself together and swung round, for a moment quite expecting the man to hurl himself upon him.

"Mostyn!" cried Blaine again, and stepped back as Henry moved towards him as though to seize him. "Listen—a minute! Hear me speak! See, I am unarmed—and——"

"Speak!" said Henry quietly, and waved back the surging mass of Indians who had swept forward as they realised who it was that had come racing towards their brother. "Speak!"

"For years I have hated you, Mostyn," Blaine began, "since the days when we played with toy bows and arrows. Oh, how I hated you! You know how I have tried to murder you—left you helpless in the barren lands, led red men against you—sought in every way to bring disaster upon you. I have flung back with scorn your offers of peace—have spat upon your shadow, and hated you more because, when you could have killed me, you have given me my life. But to-night—to-night! Mostyn, you have taught me that which I never knew before. You have taught me that truth and fair dealing, the clean heart that can forgive, are better than all else. To-night you have become brother indeed to these red men, who worship you as a god! And I, scoundrel as I am, Mostyn, as God is my witness, I love you for all you are!"

He paused to take breath, and his eyes were fixed upon Mostyn, so that he did not see the look of wonder in the faces of the red men, some few of whom—the Chippewayans—understood what he was saying. He was not speaking to them; he had utterly forgotten them, in fact. He felt his very soul unveiled, and knew then, what he had tried not to know before, that through all these years he had been in the wrong and Mostyn in the right, and he was ashamed of himself. He was not cringing. There was nothing of the servile applicant in his manner, but only real, honest admiration for Mostyn.

"I am your prisoner, Mostyn," he went on after that brief pause, during which no one had spoken. "Till to-night I had made up my mind that come what might I would not go back to the Churchill with you—somehow I would find a way of escape, and take revenge on you; but all that is past. I shall go to the Churchill not as a captive, although my hands and feet may be bound, but willingly, and shall take that which is waiting for me there. Shame be on me for ever if, while red men and white can be brothers, white men cannot be brothers. Till the day of my death, Mostyn, I am your brother!"

Had Blaine been acting a part, the effect could not have been more dramatic. Those of the Chippewayans who understood some-

thing of what he was saying gasped in amazement, while Mostyn and Horne looked at each other, wondering what to think of it all.

"He's playing up to you, Henry," whispered the old trader.

"Nay, he's not!" answered Henry as softly. "Did you not hear the ring in his voice, and see the light in his eyes?"

He stepped forward a pace or so, and then, to the astonishment of everyone—not least of Blaine himself—reached out his right hand and grasped that of Blaine.

"My brother!" he said simply. And then, like a flash, swung round, and, facing the crowd of red men, spoke feverishly and long, telling them how the pale-face, who had been his foe, was now his friend.

"Henceforth," he said, "he is my brother!"

He paused then, for it had come to him that the matter did not rest entirely with him; he had promised the People of the Yellow River that this man should be taken before the bar of the white men's justice for the crimes that he had committed against the red men, and unless they released him from his promise this must be done. He determined to make a bold bid for Blaine, so that the man should have another chance to make good.

"Listen, O brothers!" he said. "This my brother has done that which is evil to you all; he has led his men to battle against you, and



your braves lie dead because of him. Do what you will with him, but remember this: he is the brother of the Little Peacemaker! "

He ceased speaking, and stepped back to the side of Blaine, whose hand he took and gripped hard.

Utterly undone, the other was now almost on the verge of tears, strong man that he was. "God bless you, Henry!" he breathed, and together these two, once mortal foes, now friends, stood and waited for what the red men might say.

The first to speak was the Lynx, and he spoke to his own people.

"Listen, O People of the North!" he said. "The Little Peacemaker, who has made peace with us and for us, has now made peace for himself. Shall it be said that we did aught to bring sorrow and woe upon him?"

"It shall not be said thus!" cried the Chippewayans as one man; and the Lynx turned to Henry:

"You have heard, O Little Peacemaker! It is good!"

Forward stepped the Chief of the Yellow People.

"Even as my brother the Lynx has said, so be it!" he cried. "Let the white man go in peace!"

And then the Athabascans added their voice to the chant of peace, until the forest rang

and the dogs in the stockade crouched away, wondering what it all might mean.

"Come, Tom!" said Henry when the noise had died down. "Come!" and he led him to the fire where he and the chiefs were to sit and partake of the feast; and together they ate and smoked, and then talked for long after the red men, gorged to repletion, had sagged and fallen asleep.

"We'll go back to the Churchill," Henry was saying, just as the Lynx tumbled off to sleep. "No one there knows anything about—well, no one knows anything except our fathers, and——"

"See here, Henry," said Blaine firmly. "I feel a bit of a skunk! When unable to contain myself any longer, I raced away from those two guards, I didn't think that anything like this would happen. I want you to believe that, Henry."

For answer Henry gripped his hand but said nothing.

"Thanks, Henry," said Blaine. "I'm going back to the Churchill with the whitest man on God's earth."

And back to the fort on the Churchill Tom Blaine did go with Henry Mostyn, but not before he had promised all the red men that some day he would visit them and bring fine

gifts for their squaws, since he had none with him then, and the red men were glad.

The joy of those who could not go with the white men, up the rivers and across the plains, was tempered by the fact that they had to leave them; but Henry promised that he, too, would come back, and it was arranged that the next season he and Blaine should come with sleigh on sleigh of goods, to trade for the pelts which the Indians would have ready.

"And remember, Little Peacemaker," said Strong Arm in parting, as Henry and Blaine entered the last canoe, after having shut up the post for the long months to come, "remember that the Yellow River holds the dirt that you want! Come, fetch it; it is yours!"

And so it was that, weeks afterwards, Mostyn and Blaine, after a journey up river, and across mountains and plains and through forests, entered Prince of Wales Fort, with large numbers of Chippewayans who had transported the pelts for them. And never were men received with so great a welcome, for their consignment of furs was the finest ever brought into the fort, as far as the oldest trader there could remember; and the gold which Henry had sent home told the white men that the country to which they had exiled themselves must be one of the richest on earth, and they dreamed great dreams of the future.

But Henry's greatest joy was when, standing in the old home, with his father and Tom Blaine, and the old man who had been mourning for his son and hiding his shame in his heart, the four men shook hands with each other, and he was able to say:

"Thank God the hatchet is buried!"

THE END

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